

# My Aid Folk

Winnifred A. Isbister



Denman Island  
1875-1975



# My Ain folk

BY  
Winnifred Isbister



S McKay

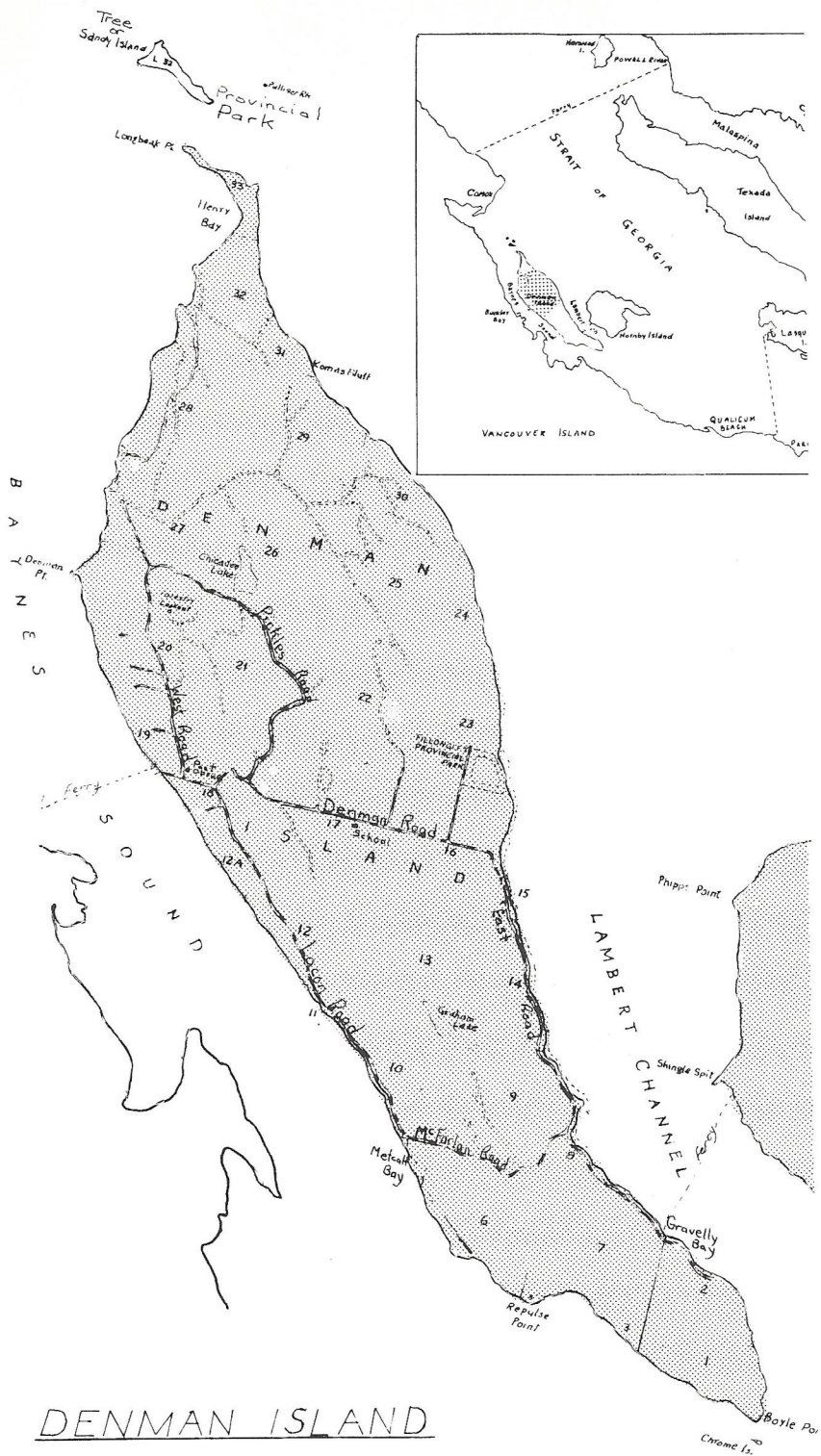


ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
PRINTED IN THE COMOX VALLEY

*by*  
E. W. BICKLE LTD.  
*web offset specialists*

•

FIRST PRINTING  
1976



## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Tommy Menzies, Margery Corrigall, Doras Kirk and Beth McKinnon for the contributions; also Alex Brown for the map and all who gave me information and loaned me pictures.

Special thanks go to Ralph Mayer and Shirley McKay for their sketches and to George Giffen for reading most of the material.

My mother, Selena Piercy, arrived on Denman at the age of three and through the years kept many articles of interest and photographs. My dad, William Baikie, came to Denman in 1888 and was a store of information. I was born on Denman and remember most of the pioneers. I kept many cuttings from the Comox Argus, The Comox District Free Press and the Colonist.

I hope "My Ain Folk" will rekindle cherished memories for my relatives, school friends and their families and that the younger generations will have a glimpse into a unique community of contented hard-working settlers who chose to live on this beautiful island.

## Dedication

I dedicate this book to my husband who loved his farm and animals and took great pride in his ploughmanship. The school, Farmers' Institute, 4-H clubs, church, cemetery, Legion, telephone, lodges and thirty years as Justice of the Peace kept him very busy. He found time before or after chores to go fishing, read books and enjoy a game of cards.

Our family are proud to call Denman their home. They were all raised on our 75-acre dairy farm "Flettville" by the sea where we lived for 43 years.



I have endeavoured to present a vivid picture of the life in the early days, the perseverance, patience, and energy that have been necessary to turn a forested island into profitable gardens and smiling farms.

## Denmans Were Famous People

The first Lord Denman served in the royal court of George Fourth. He was a famous lawyer and made a very powerful speech to prevent the second reading of a bill regarding the immoral behaviour of Queen Caroline. She lived only one year with her royal husband, and then went to Italy in 1814. The event rocked the British monarchy to its foundations and made the reputations of Lord Denman and Lord Brougham, her defending counsel.

Lord Denman's son served in the court of William Fourth and his grandson served Queen Victoria. The last Lord Denman stood on guard in Westminster Abbey when Edward VII lay in state. In 1910 he went to Australia as Governor-General.

The man after whom Denman Island was named was Rear-Admiral The Hon. Joseph Denman, Commander-in-Chief of Pacific Station Esquimalt 1864 to 1867, flagship, HMS Sutlej. He was born June 23rd, 1810, second son of Thomas Denman, 1st Lord Baron Denman. He entered the navy in 1823, rose to Lieutenant in 1831. Commander in 1835, Captain in 1841. Groom in waiting to Queen Victoria in 1856. Rear Admiral in 1862. Shortly after taking over the command of the Pacific station from Admiral Kingcome, in May 1864, Admiral Denman in his flagship, accompanied by HMS Devastation, visited Clayoquot Sound in October, 1864, to punish the Ahousat Indians for the murder of the crew and destruction of the trading sloop Kingfisher.

Rev. J. Cave Brown Cave, first Anglican Missionary Catechist, who came to reside in Comox in 1863 had sent many reports to the authorities at Victoria regarding the troublesome Euclataw Indians, a tribe of 150 from Cape Mudge who came into Comox. They camped on the Comox potato lands about two miles up the Courtenay River, where some of the white settlers had their farms. They planned to steal the potatoes from the 70 scattered settlers, unlike the Comox tribe of Indians who had been friendly and helpful in harvesting the potatoes. The Indian women dug the potatoes with large clam shells and for payment were allowed to take

a Hudson Bay pailful home daily. The settlers did not want trouble with the Indians.

Her Majesty's gunboat "Forward" made several trips to Comox and the Honourable Rear-Admiral Denman at Esquimalt was so concerned with reports he arranged a meeting with the settlers after arriving at Comox on the *Sutlej*, accompanied by "Ellis" and "Sparrowhawk". It was decided to let the Euclataws come during the salmon season and to depart at its conclusion, namely September 1 to the end of December. In order to impress on the Indians the necessity of good behaviour, Admiral Denman had Claylik, their principal chief, placed in irons for 48 hours for having pointed a musket at the Rev. Cave Brown Cave during the summer. He was released from irons and in time he brought the other chiefs on board to impress upon them the need to obtain permission to come to Comox for the salmon fishing. Claylik was appointed constable along with two others to keep order among the Euclataws, thus ending the trouble.

Admiral Denman preferred the sea to the shore and he took his flagship *HMS Sutlej* on long voyages over unchartered waters and to remote Indian villages. In those days the Admiral's wife could travel in her husband's ship so Grace Denman frequently went with him. She was aboard when the *Sutlej* sailed to Ahousat to pick up the murderers of the captain and several crew members of the ship called the *Kingfisher*. Shots were fired and some in the village were killed. When *Sutlej* men went ashore they found a small Indian girl. She was taken aboard ship and Mrs. Denman decided to adopt her. When they arrived at Victoria Mrs. Denman outfitted her in the latest fashions. A few months later she accompanied them on the flagship on a voyage to Valparaiso.

The girl was christened Margrette but to the ship's crew she was "Maggie *Sutlej*". They showered her with gifts and petted and spoiled her. On the return trip the child died. Her name is recorded on the sandstone monument in Pioneer Square, near Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, erected to the men of *Sutlej* who died on this station and to "Maggie *Sutlej*", who was buried at sea.

The Denmans were at Esquimalt base for two years and while there they took part in all the leading events ashore. They entertained by giving dances and receptions on the quarterdeck of the flagship.

In 1864 at the first ball given by Vancouver Island's Governor Arthur Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy at Cary Castle the Denmans were prominent among the guests. They also attended a ball at New Westminster given by British Columbia mainland Governor Seymour and Mrs. Seymour. It was during this time that many fierce arguments took place between Victoria and New Westminster as to which would be the capital of the united colony of British Columbia. Their names also appeared among the notables at the laying of the cornerstone of the Female Infirmary at the head of Pandora Avenue, Victoria, in 1864.

Mrs. Denman laid the foundation stone of St. Paul's Naval and Garrison Church in Victoria in August, 1866 and Admiral and Mrs. Denman left Esquimalt in HMS Sutlej for England. The church was completed and consecrated by the Bishop of Columbia on December 12 that same year.

Vice-Admiral the Honourable Joseph Denman retired in 1866 and died on November 26, 1874. Denman Island was named about 1864 by Captain George Richards, an hydrographer for the British Admiralty. Admiral Denman got to know Denman Island while he was at Comox and on his various trips around the coast. Both the cities of Victoria and Vancouver have streets named after him; also Denman Mountain (6,590 feet), Homfray Channel.

The third Baron Denman, having inherited the title from his great-uncle in 1894 when 20, went to Sandhurst and then served in the South African war, was wounded and invalided home. In 1902, he became active in politics as a Liberal peer. He married in 1903, Gertrude Pearson whose father became Baron Cowdray in 1910 and the first Viscount Cowdray in 1917. They had two children, Thomas (1905) later 4th Baron Denman who died in 1971, and Judith (1908) later the Honourable Lady Burrell. She had four children, two boys and two girls, the latter both married in 1953.

In 1911, Lord Denman, then 36, became Governor General of Australia. In 1913 the foundation stone for the new seat of government was laid by the Governor General on behalf of the King, and Lady Denman performed the naming ceremony, "I name the capital of Australia Canberra". The Denmans returned to England in May 1914.

Lord and Lady Denman then threw themselves into all kinds of war work. Lady Denman devoted herself to the Women's Land Army. In 1915 the first Women's Institute was formed in Llanfairpwll, Wales, and from that time on one of her main activities was the WI. She was chairman of the National Federation of Women's Institutes Executive Committee from the beginning until 1949 and was trustee until her death in 1954. Women's Institutes in England shortly after World War II worked hard to establish a Women's Institute College named Denman College after Lady Denman. For 25 years Lady Denman kept before members the essential principles of democratic procedure, and by her clear brain and courageous leadership enabled them to lay a sound foundation for the extraordinary expansion of the movement and its many developments.

The college is built of Cotswold stone and is situated near Berkshire village and about nine miles from Oxford. At the residential college specialized courses are given for all branches of Women's Institute work. It is a friendly pleasant country house where busy country women can take a course and enjoy a holiday also.



## Denman Island

Denman is situated some 175 miles north of the city of Vancouver. It is bounded on the west by Baynes Sound and Vancouver Island, and on the east by Lambert Channel and Hornby Island. The Gulf of Georgia forms the southern boundary while on the north Longbeak Point, consisting of Tree Island and Sandy and Seal Islands, run out towards Comox Spit. The strip of water between at very low tide is only two fathom deep on the sand bar and it is believed that it was once solid land. Denman Island was named after Rear Admiral the Honourable Joseph Denman and Lambert Channel and Baynes Sound were named after Denman's brother-in-law Rear Admiral Robert Lambert Baynes, Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Station, 1857-1864.

The island is approximately 12 miles in length and four miles across the middle, tapering to each end. It covers 19.2 square miles and has a coastline of 27 miles. The long narrow ridge which runs down the centre rises to over 300 feet at its highest point above the former Gavin Russell property. A forestry fire look-out was erected here around 1920 and from it the whole of the Beaufort Range on Vancouver Island from Comox Lake to near Qualicum could be seen. It was maintained until 1965 but was dismantled as better forestry communications and water bombers came into being.

The coast line is varied. A high proportion has steep, wooded slopes with most of the remainder having a low, rocky shoreline interspersed with coves and beaches. The main geological formations are sedimentary rocks, principally sandstone, soft shale and conglomerate. Chickadee Lake in the north covers 35 acres and Graham Lake in the south covers 33 acres, both draining to the east. The Beaver Pond and several large marshes are in the centre of the island.

Henry Bay and Tree Island in the north and Metcalfe Bay in the south have the best beaches. Fillongley Beach, Isbister Beach and other small bays have fair pebbly beaches. From Gravelly Bay to Boyle Point at the southern tip there are sea cliffs over one hundred feet high, rock pinnacles and giant conglomerate boulders. Eagle Rock lies about 35 yards from shore.

The Crown land above Boyle Point was logged off some years ago. The narrow meadows with wind swept trees along the top of the cliffs has scenic qualities and could be developed into a public trail for hikers. The high sand bluffs above Fillongley Park and the northern end of the island are undeveloped.

The timber is chiefly red fir, balsam, cedar, hemlock, pine, maple, alder and willow. Wild cherry are plentiful, while arbutus and dogwood are generally found on the mountain ridge. The lovely white dogwood blossoms in spring and the brilliant red leaves along with the yellow maple leaves in autumn beautify the countryside. Flowering shrubs as red



currant, spiraea, mock orange, sweet briar and wild roses abound. Dozens of varieties of wild flowers grow in the meadows and woodland while the rarer lady slippers and trilliums like the deep woods. Tiny dainty pink twin-sister bells grow on vines among the moss.

Denman is considered to have the best agricultural land of the Gulf Islands. The best soil is on the west side fronting Baynes Sound. Along the south-east coast bedrock is exposed and in other locations only a few inches of soil cover the hardpan. In several places on the high ridge behind Graham Lake great deep cracks are found.

Denman has 30 miles of public roads, eight of which are black-topped and provide good transportation between the Denman and Hornby ferry landings. The mixed wooded and pastoral countryside with old homesteads with gabled farmhouses, large barns and sheds, cultivated fields and snake fences gives much of the island a strong rural and picturesque quality. The roads parallel to the water front providing an excellent view of the sea and mountains. First Tarvia was laid in 1962. Denman Road is being widened considerably.

For a time Denman was nick-named "Little Orkney," due to the predominance of Orkney settlers. William Baikie arrived in 1888 followed by Tom and Jack Chalmers and Mrs. J. Scott around 1898. The Corrigan and Robertson families came in 1908 and the Isbister families in 1919. Later the William Stout family resided for some years on the island but today only a few remain here of these original families.

## Denman Island Weather

Denman Island's climate is generally three weeks to a month earlier than the Comox Valley and the temperature rarely goes below zero degrees F. It is also drier in the summer than the Valley and the Lower Mainland as the showers follow the Beaufort range of Vancouver Island. Fruit and produce ripen early and lambs arrive in January and February.

Snow does not lie long on the south side of the island due to the mild sea air but the winter of 1889-1890 was severe and gave the district the heaviest snow fall on record. Snow fell on the night of December 29, 1915 and continued to fall periodically until there was over four feet on the level during late February 1916. It was the end of March before the ground was bare.

The weather made history in 1949-1950. A heavy snow fall during the first week in January stopped all transportation for several days. The grader and gravel truck were unable to run. Tom and Jack Isbister's teams and a home-made snow plough preceded by Carl Neilson with a team and drag, made the trip across to the wharf, store, and post office. They also ploughed the east road to Gravelly Bay. The "Billy B" ferry brought

a caterpillar from Hornby to Gravelly Bay and Jack Parnell ploughed the roads to enable Marcus Isbister to make the trip to Courtenay with the cream truck on Monday as he was unable to make the trip on Thursday and the farmers were getting short on feed. Side roads were soon ploughed to enable the school bus and mail truck to make their rounds.

Luckily the rural telephone line was in operation but the Government telegraph line was cut off by breaks at Buckley Bay so messages were sent via the ferry. The temperature went to three degrees below zero F. in several places. There was over three feet of snow on the mountain road by the United Church, which incidentally is the worst hill in the district. Some years are very mild with maybe a light snow fall before Christmas and none again until late January. Occasionally a cold spell will keep the ponds frozen for several weeks. In 1928 Chickadee Lake was frozen over and men working at the Henry Bay Logging were able to leave their cars and walk across the lake but this is the only time on record.

January 1969 went down on record as the second coldest January in 27 years and the third coldest in 56 years. The record was set in 1950 with 30 consecutive very cold days.

During these snowy winters the farmers on the east side of the island would drive their teams and wagons as far as the cemetery. They unloaded their produce on a drag or home-made sleigh and drove across to the wharf or store. They repeated the procedure on the return trip and left the drag parked until the road was bare. In 1916 the main road was unbroken for days and occasionally someone would travel across on horseback or walk.

The snow was about a foot deep for the first two weeks in January 1916 and the young people had a wonderful time at surprise parties held in different homes. Howard McFarlan and the Piercy boys would hitch their teams to the large bob-sleighs and pick up people from one home to another. The ladies took refreshments and soon after the leaves from the large tables were stored and everyone joined in the dances. Next party was planned as they drove home to the merry tinkle of sleigh-bells. The last party was held at the old hall and during the evening so much snow fell the roads were almost impassable.

Young people on the east side of Denman who were home for the festive season in December 1949 had travelled in Marcus Isbister's large cream truck to the community hall to attend the New Year's party and dance. When the merry-makers were ready to go home they discovered it had been snowing heavily all night. They decided to stay at the hall until the storm abated. The stoves were stocked and they were comfortable while they finished the left-over refreshments. The cream truck was unable to make the mountain road so Marcus drove home via the Lacon and McFarlan cross-road. The passengers had to get out and help push the truck up the hills so they were very wet and cold when they arrived home to find their parents already getting up to do the chores.

# History of Denman Island

## *Indians*

Denman Island was used as a summer home by the Indians of the Puntledge tribe, whose winter homes were at Comox on Vancouver Island. They spoke the Chinook language and lived in primitive shacks or huts composed of slabs of cedar with a small door or small openings. Sometimes a large barnlike house was built in which three or four families lived. Their sleeping quarters were raised platforms portioned off by skins and bark. In the long middle passage fires were lit and meals were cooked.

While on their hunting trips to Denman the Indians lived in huts. They also fished and dug clams. The remains of many clam beds camps and middens are still found at Henry Bay and Metcalfe Bay and many other camping spots around the shoreline. The tribes people ate fresh and dried salmon, colican oil, deermeat and berries. Their clothing was chiefly blankets thrown loosely around them, and they used skins and furs for bedding and moccasins and garments. With cedar barks they made mats and rope. By adding hair a rough cloth was made. Canoes and totem poles were fashioned from cedar trees.

Often these Indians would have a deer drive. The braves formed a line across a narrow part of the island, let out their war whoops and drove the deer before them into the salt water where braves in canoes knocked the deer on the head with clubs. Enough food would be obtained to last for some time. Two such drives took place on the island after the white man came.

Some vigorous battles were fought among the local tribes. A noted one was held several years before 1850 and raged all day. Remains of the conflict are still to be found by those ambitious enough to search the wilds of northern Denman.

If we visit Yellow Rock today, we can find writings recording a great battle fought with the mainland Indians; it is not known who won the battle. The dead, in early days were disposed of by being placed in boxes and put high in the limbs of a large tree. In later times they began to bury their dead as white people do, in their own cemetery.

In contrast to the records of their warlike nature, these Indians were noted for their honesty and friendly attitude towards the white man.

The women were more dependable than men as hired help. They were fond of music and readily picked up common tunes. Early white women settlers were somewhat nervous of the Indians who often came and sat near the doors of the cabins, usually from curiosity, but if the women offered them food they would leave.



Gradually as the island became settled by the white man, the Indians spent less time at their summer homes and none have resided here since the turn of the century.

Excellent collections of Indian relics have been found here during the years; namely - arrow heads, hammers, paints, gambling rocks, anchors, necklaces, grinding stones and mixing bowls. When land at Metcalfe Bay was bulldozed an Indian camp was revealed with remnants of cod fish scales, teeth from an unknown animal, pipes and mixing bowls. Indian graves were found on the Beadnell property. Middens have been found in various bays around the coastline and what appear to be man-made trenches, eight feet high and thirty feet wide are still visible at the extreme ends of Denman. Few people recognize their significance but it is believed the Indians had dug them for defence.

Comox, or Kommox as it was once called, means "Land of Plenty". The tribes from Bella Coola, Cape Mudge and Campbell River visited Comox during the salmon season because they figured the Comox tribes were better off and had plenty to share.

The late Chief Andy Frank of the Comox tribe was born on Tree Island in 1906 and was very proud to say so. He loved to joke and say he was born in Tree Island hospital. He did much to bridge the gap between the white man and the native Indian and in an effort to keep his dying culture alive, he taught the younger Indians as much as he could. Denman was called the Inner Island, being more sheltered than Hornby, which was called the Outer Island by the Indians.

Chief Andy Frank and members of his family were guests at the Women's Institute social at the hall some years ago and he told the legends of his masks, which had been handed down for generations in his family, and of the dances and early life of his people.

The chief and his daughter danced in full Indian dress.

A framed photo of himself and Chief Mungo Martin taken in traditional dress was presented to the Denman Island Women's Institute. Chief Andy Frank, chief of the Kommox Indian Band was one of the last hereditary chiefs on the West Coast. He was a fisherman and died from injuries when he fell between a fishing seiner and an oil barge. Chief Andy Frank and his wife were always honoured guests at the annual Pioneers' Reunion sponsored by the Native Sons of Canada and the Canadian Daughters.

One of the chief's last accomplishments was the building of the Indian Longhouse. It was moved from the exhibition grounds to the Indian reserve on the Dyke.



# Pioneer Settlers

## *The Pioneer*

Give me the strength of a pioneer,  
That irks at the thought of a bond;  
Give me a vision, a path to clear,  
That beckons me upward and on!

First record of Denman Island being visited by white man was the visit by Alex Urquhart, then living at Fanny Bay on Vancouver Island, who came over on a hunting trip.

Then in 1874, Peter Berry and his partner W. Robb located as squatters on the place later known as the Madigan, a large marsh situated in the centre of the island. Jim McCoy first located on the McMillan farm, he was the settler partner with McMillan and later sold to McMillan. David Pickles another of these very first settlers, was followed by his brother Abraham and family and Kenneth Henderson in 1876.

A settler named Metcalfe built a cabin not far from the bay which bears his name. Later the Indians stole it from him.

The first survey was carried out by surveyor George Drabble, who boarded with the McMillans in 1875. At this time, George Edwards located on the east side of the island at what was known later as the Bob Swan farm. Edwards and Joe Rodella logged down Beadnell's creek with oxen. Rodella, an English-speaking Italian, had been one of Garibaldi's soldiers. He was rather remarkable character of those days and was very prominent in the history of Comox.

J. Madigan pre-empted the McMillan, Ormiston and Piercy places as they were later known, situated on the west side of the island along the shore.

John McCutcheon and his wife and family came to live on the island in 1876 and he brought the McFarlan brothers -- George, Walter, Charles, John and Jim and their families. They pre-empted the east side of the island, running from the present McFarlan cross road up the East road and up the present main or Denman road to the school. The McCutcheons settled on the east side on property now known as the Dalziel place. W.S. Yates arrived in 1877 and also, Bill and John Morrison and their sister Anne, Yates took up property which is known as the Beadnell estate.

The Tom Piercy and John Piercy families came from Comox and bought a tract of land from Madigan on the west side in 1876.

A man named Welch was on the present Runkle place at Henry Bay. He lived in a cabin by the creek and died in the old men's home at Victoria.

In 1878 Dave Murray pre-empted what was known as the Nixon place, which he sold to William Dingwall who was the clerk in the store at the Baynes Sound Mines at Buckley Bay. Andrew McDonald moved onto the island from the Baynes Sound Mines which closed around this time. Along with him came Robert Swan. McDonald took up land at the south end, now the Lacon estate. Swan located near the centre of the West side. Charles McCutcheon moved the post office over from the Mines.

The school was built in 1878 and the first schoolmaster was John McCutcheon. The first sermon was preached by the Presbyterian minister, the Rev. McElmon of Comox in 1878. The service was held at the Robert Swan's home.

Mr. and Mrs. John Piket and infant son Tom arrived and this year also brought John Graham, who was married to one of the McFarlan girls and they took up land on what is now the Dickson's residence. Then came Tom Keenan and his wife, also a McFarlan. The Keenan family settled on land in the centre of the island, later known as Ed Millard's farm. Will Keenan accompanied his brother.

In 1883, W. Dingwall was elected member of parliament for the Comox District and in 1886 was successful in having a wharf built at Denman Island.

Walt Piercy was living on the place generally known as Bill Kelseys. It was recorded around this time that the partnership of Peter Berry and W. Robb broke up. Robb sold out to Madigan and Peter Berry had to move out. He went to what became later the Piket farm and lived there until he died, bequeathing to Tom Piket. Berry had a friend named Holmes, a Swedish fisherman, who lived around the island for many years and was quite a character.

Jim McFarlan died in 1886.

Judge H. Crease bought part of the Tom Piercy holdings and also Walt Piercy's place. This place he let to a man to build a hotel. The people on the island would not stand for a licensed place so the man pulled out and left Judge Crease holding the property. Bob Swan and Yates hewed the foundation timber for this building which was framed for six bedrooms on the second floor. It was abandoned until Bob Swan and his son Sandy salvaged the lumber and built the old part of the house now owned by Doug Wood. Later Wesley Piercy bought the property and lived there for many years until he sold to Bill Kelsey and moved to Buckley Bay.

The first store was opened in 1886 by Tom Pickard on Barcroft Flats, Metcalfe Bay. In 1889 W. Cheney, an auctioneer, operated a store near the present store.

At this time, Theodore Nelson, a Norwegian sailor, came to Denman to work for Tom Pickard and later for McMillan, taking up land next to McMillan. Nelson sold his holdings to William Baikie in later years, then, after wandering around some more, came back to the island and

bought a small parcel of his old estate from Baikie where he resided for many years.

In about the year 1888, there was a man named Johnny Dore, a friend of Dave Pickles, who took up property, later known as the Wilson estate. Dore was drowned at Comox and buried in the Catholic cemetery there.

Around Christmas 1888 William Baikie arrived and also George Beadnell in search of a suitable place to locate.

The Methodist church was built in 1888-1889 under the leadership of the Rev. W.W. Baer. Markam Ball, a young Englishman came out to visit the Gladdings of Cumberland in 1889. He came to Denman to work for Dave Pickles and then took up a place near the Beadnell estate, later known as the Chudy place.

Mr. and Mrs. James Ormiston arrived in 1891 and bought the John Piercy property. Harry Beadnell came on a visit from Australia and bought the John McCutcheon place adjoining the Beadnell estate.

In 1893, Jack Scott from Hornby came over to work for Dave Pickles and for many years worked around the island, later marrying a Mary Miller, who was visiting William Baikie whom she had known in Orkney, Scotland.

In 1893 after working for McMillan for several years William Baikie rented the McDonald Farm. The Nixon family had arrived the year previous and settled on the W. Dingwall place.

In the year 1895 Tom and Jack Chalmers, who came from the same place in the Orkney Island as W. Baikie, came up from Portland, Oregon and bought Charles McFarlan out. They ranched and cleared up the farms now known as Isbisters. Baikie and Jack Scott had earlier bought part of the Charles McFarlan property.

The McFarlan families moved to the Hawaiian Islands in 1896.

Another Graham family, Mr. and Mrs. James Graham and family arrived from Victoria in 1897. They rented the Judge Crease place where they lived for several years. They bought large acreage in the centre of the island not far from the school, part of which was a marsh and the rest heavily timbered. The Grahams operated a small store. Mrs. W. DeYoung lives there at the time of writing.

In the year 1897, Mr. T.D. McLean and his wife from Cumberland bought a small place (Morey's) from Bob Swan and lived on Denman for a number of years. He owned a jewellery store in Cumberland and they eventually returned there.

The lumber industry began to grow around this period and this brought out the need for roads and a program of road building was started, principally done by the settlers under the contract system. A community hall was built.

Dr. Lindsay-Dickson and his wife visited the island while on a visit from England and he took a fancy to the John Graham place. He was a



keen sportsman and was particularly interested in Graham Lake, which bordered his property. He built a new house and lived here in retirement for a number of years before turning the farm over to his son Gerald. They returned to England.

Gerald married a Denman girl, Laura Keenan and they resided on the farm while the family of three sons and two girls were growing up. Later they moved to Victoria and had hired help run the farm on Denman. The A. Chafer, Bill Schmidt and the Henderson families were employed here for a number of years. Later Mr. and Mrs. Dickson and their youngest son Clive returned and farmed in a small way. Clive continues to live in the lovely bungalow home which was built around 1920, and is one of the few descendants of pioneer families remaining on their original farms.

Harry Gordon took up a place where Welch had located at the north end of the island. Al Scott owns this property. Harry's cousin Walter Gordon and his mother Mrs. N.T. Gordon came to the island, along with his sister, Mrs. M. Fisher and her two sons, Arthur and Alfred and daughter Jessie. Arthur taught school on Denman for a time and then the family moved to Vancouver. Jessie taught school in Vancouver and became prominent in educational matters. Mrs. Gordon passed away and was buried near Village Point (Gordon Wright's spit) where they resided. Her remains were moved to the Denman cemetery many years later. Walter remained on Denman for a number of years and then moved to Hornby Island.

Dundas Thwaites arrived from England in 1903 to visit his sister, Mrs. Harry Beadnell. He worked for William Baikie in logging and then worked for a time at Comox. He eventually settled in Qualicum and became established in real estate.

Harry Beadnell sold his place to Mr. and Mrs. John Bannerman and family who resided here for several years, later selling to George Dalziel.

William Baikie took a trip back to Orkney in November 1907. He brought back his niece and five young men, and the following December his sister Ann Corrigall and her husband and family of three sons and three daughters, a married daughter, Mrs. James Robertson and infant daughter arrived. James Robertson had arrived earlier in the year and was working for Baikie. James Corrigall bought part of the Bob Swan place situated on the top of the mountain near the United Church. Mr. and Mrs. J. Hayman own this property in 1975.

The Corrigall girls married Denman men -- Kitty became Mrs. Sandy Swan; Annie married Jack Wood; Lizzie became Mrs. Jim Piercy and Maggie married Francis Graham. Dave worked as a donkey engineer for the Squamish Logging. He passed away in 1917. John and Joe both owned farms and lived on Denman for many years.

The sandstone quarry brought a lot of settlers. Sam Dumaresq bought acres from Bob Swan and he built a large home. The Grieder



family own it in 1975. Arthur Dumaresq built the house belonging to Mrs. William Wright. Tony Tessaro built a home opposite Arthur Dumaresq's place. Bert Fulton was blacksmith at the quarry. He married Iza Swan and they took over the Swan homestead and ran a dairy farm. Percy Smith was an engineer at the quarry for a time before he bought out Mrs. James Graham's store. The Ramsays, Nuttings, Bouchers, Savoie and DePape families lived here for a short time. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Stewart and family lived near the school for many years. Charles Tweedie married Flora Keenan and built a log house down Pickles road near a large swamp which bears his name. He was an engineer on the steam boats during the gold rush in the Klondike days. The family moved to Fanny Bay around 1909.

Edward Graham and Johnny Graham, sons of John Graham, had worked off the island for some years, returned with their families around 1908. They bought land and built houses near the store where their brother Alby had settled. The brothers ran a sawmill for a time. Johnny and family returned to Victoria around 1912. Alby later moved to Sidney, B.C.

Bob Graham and his brother Tom and his wife lived for a time on Denman. They were sons of James Graham and were not related to the John Graham family. They ran a sawmill and logged. Mr. and Mrs. Abe McLauchin and family lived here for a time.

Tommy Lesley, after working for Dave Pickles family, bought the Markham Ball place. Later he enlisted in the 102nd Battalion and was killed overseas in 1916. John Doney bought part of the Morrison place and built a home. This was later known as the Callahan place. He established a small farm and he was also lighthouse keeper at Yellow Rock (Chrome Island). Members of his family and a relative, Bella Bracken, helped run the farm. A trail along the shore bank through the forest enabled them to carry on these duties.

Washington Scott of Hornby Island bought a place from the McFarlans and he built the house Mrs. E. Jerrard still lived in 1975. He married Maggie Bracken from Ireland who was visiting her aunt Mrs. J. Doney. He established a small farm and he carried the mail to Hornby Island residents, often rowing Lambert Channel in very stormy weather to deliver the mail bags to the postmaster, Tom Smith.

Mr. and Mrs. C. Conway bought part of the McFarlan property near Washington Scott. The Conways moved away around 1924, after selling out to Mike Bell-Irving. Mike sold to S.G. Ryall who operated the general store. The Ryall family lived here for many years and John Ryall still owns part of the property.

Mr. and Mrs. Jim Street and family bought a portion of land near the Arthur Dumaresq place. Jim Street was an engineer at the quarry and during World War I he was lightkeeper at Yellow Rock.

Gavin Russell married Maggie McMillan and they bought part of the

McMillan place. Mr. and Mrs. John Anderson and daughter Winifred, and a married daughter and family, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Adey came to Denman in 1909. They bought the Jimmy Graham place, known later as the Bergener place. It is part of Green Ridge farm owned by Gordon Wright. After residing here for a few years the families moved to Sandwick near Courtenay.

During the fall of 1911, Harry Beadnell, Comox introduced H.R. Lacon to the island. He bought the Baikie farm and later the large farm belonging to the Kawamura brothers.

Dr. and Mrs. Henry Meadows and daughter Elsie and son Bernard from England came in 1912 and lived for many years at what became later the George Walker property. Dr. Meadows was a prominent Harley Street physician from London, England. He came to Denman to retire but he served the islanders faithfully until the family moved away around 1926. Kenneth Sharpe bought a place known as Sharpe's Point, opposite Union Bay. Cee Lacon later bought this place.

Mrs. M. Scott and family from Scotland lived at Ormiston's cottage for several years.

In the spring of 1912, Pat Doheny from Union Bay bought out Percy Smith's store and operated this business until 1932.

Jack Wood from Nova Scotia, after working in the woods for years, bought a portion of the Swan property and built the house known as the Burroughs' home.

The Bell-Irving family arrived in April 1914 from England.

Miss Florence Hale and her niece Phyllis Davis spent a number of years here before moving to Victoria.

Mr. and Mrs. Jim Nixon built a small house by Chickadee Lake around 1916. Mr. and Mrs. Dave Spencer and family from Vancouver lived in the Ormiston cottage while he was farm manager. Dave Wotherspoon worked for Irvine Piercy and his sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. W. Anderson and family and her father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Wotherspoon lived here several years on part of the Arthur Dumaesq place.

## Life of Early Settlers

Early settlers usually picked an alder bottom or meadow which could be easily cleared as a suitable spot on which to build a cabin. The logs were hand hewn and dove-tailed as to fit and for greater warmth, the cracks were chinked and caulked. Later when square lumber was available, the cabins were lined and then papered with newspaper. Wood was used extensively, being very plentiful and of very little value. Hand-hewn shakes, split with a froe, provided a roof. Poles were used to make furniture, rafts, boats and canoes, drags, stoneboats and sleighs; tools such as mauls, wedges and hammers; and even farm implements, such as carts and harrows.

Cattle hides and deer skins were tanned and cured; when pliable, were made into moccasins, gloves, pouches and bags. Sheepskins were used as mats and chair seat and bed coverings. All fat was saved and rendered to make soap. Hardwood ashes took the place of lye. Mutton tallow was made into candles; it greased boots too and later, machinery.

Housing was a serious problem for the first settlers. There was no scarcity of raw material but turning the tall timbers into usable lumber was a tremendous task. The usual method was to split the logs with wedges, trim the two halves with a broad-axe and finish the process with an adze. Then came the whipsaw, described as the all-time award for downright drudgery as it required a man at each end of the saw, one to pull it up and one pull it down hour by weary hour, to make boards out of the long logs.

Trees that were felled and were too big to handle were burned. Auger holes were bored at intervals along the top of the log and along the side, fires were lit in these holes and in time the whole centre of the log became a glowing furnace. As the logs burned out and broke in pieces they were rolled into a pile to burn again with limbs and branches. Sometimes these unwanted trees were bored and set afire while still standing. Cedar trees were split into fence rails and some of these original rails are still around on the old farms.

The pioneers were most thrifty and, through necessity practised many crafts. Sheep wool was carded, spun and woven into homespun or knitted into items of clothing.

Wool mattresses, comforters and blankets were made. All scraps of woollen and cotton materials were carefully pieced and made into quilts, hooked rugs or braided mats. Strips of coarse homespun were sewn together to form floor coverings.

Mrs. John Graham was noted for her homespun. Mrs. R. Swan supplied mattresses and comforters for Mrs. J. Piket's hotel at Union. Mrs. Tom Piercy made homespun suits for her six sons and bound the coats with braid. One of the female pioneer's most prized possessions was her sewing machine.



A boat or dugout and a hand fishing line were also most essential, not only for food but for transportation. Households could usually boast a cobbler's set but the children went barefoot as long as weather permitted. Settlers relied on their shot guns and rifles and a good many moulded their own bullets and filled their own shells with shot.

Wildlife, sea food and wild berries were very plentiful and were salted, cured and dried for winter use. Tender fern sprouts, lambquarter and young nettles and dandelions made excellent greens while blue elder berries, wild crabapples, Oregon grapes and black gooseberries were made into jelly. Later when fruit was grown, apples and prunes were sun dried or dipped in a sulphur solution and hung on strings to dry. Well-dried grain was ground into fine flour or meal. Wild herbs and plants became medicine and dyes. These kitchen skills helped eke out livelihoods and lives in isolated spots in early days.

Settlers usually had half a dozen or more large Yorkshire pigs, natural cultivators of the soil; penned in a patch of rough ground, they soon turned the soil over effectively to get the fern roots. Large stumps were practically bared by the hogs making it an easy matter to blow them out with a stick of powder. The pen was then moved to another area to get as much land as possible, however rough, ready to throw the seed in. Gradually each year, with the help of the women and children, more and more land was cleared. Most of the settlers had large families and children were considered wealth.

Two of the main winter foods were home-cured ham and bacon. Shortly before Christmas neighbours would arrive for a pig-killing bee and it was said that every part of the pig was utilized except the squeal. Even the bladder was washed and blown up as a football for the youngsters. The gall was kept in a small bottle marked "poison", to be used in case of blood poisoning. A few drops of the gall on the infected area was a remedy highly recommended by pioneer Bob Swan.

A roaring fire was lit beneath the big iron pig pot containing water and, at a scalding temperature, the butchered pig was lowered into it to loosen its hair; it was then laid on a makeshift table, the men scraped the hair off with knives and soon the carcass was lovely and clean, ready to hang to harden until the next day. It was cut into hams, and front quarters and the spareribs were removed from the bacon sides. To cure, the meat was either dry salted or put in brine in a barrel for several weeks and then removed to dry and hang in a dry place. Home-cured ham and bacon were ever ready and delicious. Bacon was a mainstay in those days although beef was plentiful at six or seven cents per pound. Potatoes sold at \$12 to \$15 per ton. A pig or calf sold at \$5.

Butter was put up in two-lb. sewn sacks, made by women. A few years later this was changed to a two-lb. roll, each wrapped in a thin muslin called butter cloth and packed into small pickle-filled barrels. The

milk was put in large tin basins and left until the cream had risen and was ready to skim. Everyone had a big churn and a butter worker, as butter soon tainted and all the buttermilk had to be thoroughly worked out as no refrigeration other than being lowered into the well was available.

Settlers depended largely on their surplus of butter and eggs for a living, along with their stock. In the 1880s butter sold at 50 cents a roll. The principal outlet was for a time with John Wilson, purser on the *Maud* and later the *Caribou Fly*, a side wheeler, which called fortnightly. He acted as a trader and commission man, sold produce in Nanaimo and Victoria and shopped for the settlers, giving good service although his choice was not always suitable.

The opening of the Union Mines at Cumberland in 1889 furnished a home market and agriculture received a great impetus. A few prices at random -- shoes sold for \$2.50; 3 yards of serge - \$1.50; 200 bricks - \$2; 1 keg of sugar - \$6; 6 lbs. of rice - 30 cents; wash board - 35 cents; corset - \$1.50; broom - 25 cents; 2 loaves of bread - 15 cents; 1 sack shorts - \$1.35; 25 lbs. of wire - \$1.15; 9 dozen eggs - \$2.70.

Monotony was broken for the hard-working islanders when they gathered at the wharf to await the arrival once a week of the steamer. They discussed community affairs in the waiting room until the mail was sorted. This neighbourly get-together was often the highlight of the week. Ideas were exchanged and times looked forward to, when perhaps, something might happen to bring them prosperity.

But with their stock, fowl, fruit and gardens these ranchers drifted into a spirit of contentment anyway. They had sufficient revenue to defy care and worry; no one went hungry and there was no one who could not jingle a few coins in his pocket.

The second milestone in the island's progress was the Swedish invention of the cream separator and the opening of the Comox Creamery.

Before the turn of the century these settlers had built new homes and had established good productive farms with stock and equipment. More people had arrived and, with better roads and transportation, life became easier. Cordial relations existed among these pioneers; neighbour helped neighbour and their hospitality was renowned.

One could quote Gray's *Elegy*:  
"Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife  
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;  
Along the cool, sequester'd vale of life  
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way"

Occasionally these people forgot their farm chores and they travelled to the city for a holiday. A party of relatives attended the Seattle World Fair when Mr. and Mrs. Tom Chalmers, Mr. and Mrs. Harve Piercy, Mr. and Mrs. Wes Piercy and Gladys, Mr. and Mrs. William Baikie and infant son Jack and Jim Piercy registered at the Bastin A.Y.P.E. Exposition Grounds, World Building, Seattle, September 22, 1909.

## Post Offices

The Baynes Sound Coal mine above Buckley Bay had the first post office north of Nanaimo and it served the area from Wellington to Comox. It was known as "Quadra", and the first postmaster was William Dingwall who served from 1876 until 1878.

When the mine closed Charles McCutcheon who was time keeper in the company's office moved the post office to Denman Island and acted as postmaster from July 1, 1878 until April 1, 1879.

Robert T. Swan was appointed postmaster in 1879 and served until 1882 followed by T.H. Piercy who served until 1884. R. Swan was then appointed and held the position until 1902. The name "Quadra" was then changed to Denman Island in 1892. Other settlements in the area had their own post offices.

Robert Swan had the post office in his home situated in the centre of the field below the mountain (Grieder's). Some of his family were grown up and living on the east side of the island on the W.S. Yates place. After sorting the mail one morning and cleaning up the papers and burning them in the stove, Nettie and Mr. Swan drove across to the Yates place. Had they looked back from the top of the mountain road they might have noticed the smoke pouring from the stove pipe. Mabel McMillan on her way to school saw the house on fire but by the time she ran to the nearest neighbours for help the home was razed.

A post office was built in part of the waiting room at the end of the wharf and the mail was sorted here for many years. R. Swan was postmaster until 1902 and T.H. Piercy served until 1904 and was followed by his son Jim who acted as postmaster until 1918. P.J. Doheny was then appointed and he moved the post office to his general store.

In early days the mail arrived by way of the weekly boat. In summer people sat around out doors and visited until the wicket was opened. In winter they sat around the stove and often it was dark and they had to drive or walk home carrying lanterns.

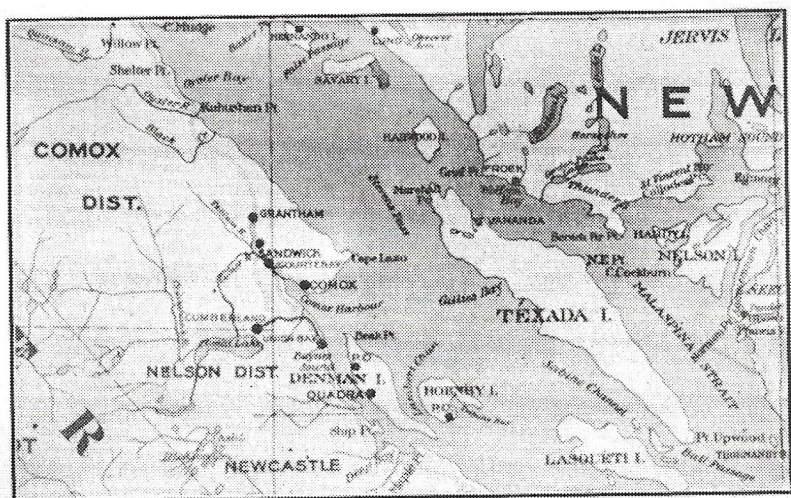
Later the mail arrived twice a week from Nanaimo, via the Charmer. Then the mail came twice a week on the Esquimalt and Nanaimo railway and was put off at Union Bay.

Sandy Swan delivered it twice a week to the Denman post office. When the ferry started in 1930 the mail was put off at Buckley Bay and Jack Scott had a contract to deliver it to the store. Later the Baikie Brothers carried it on their ferry.

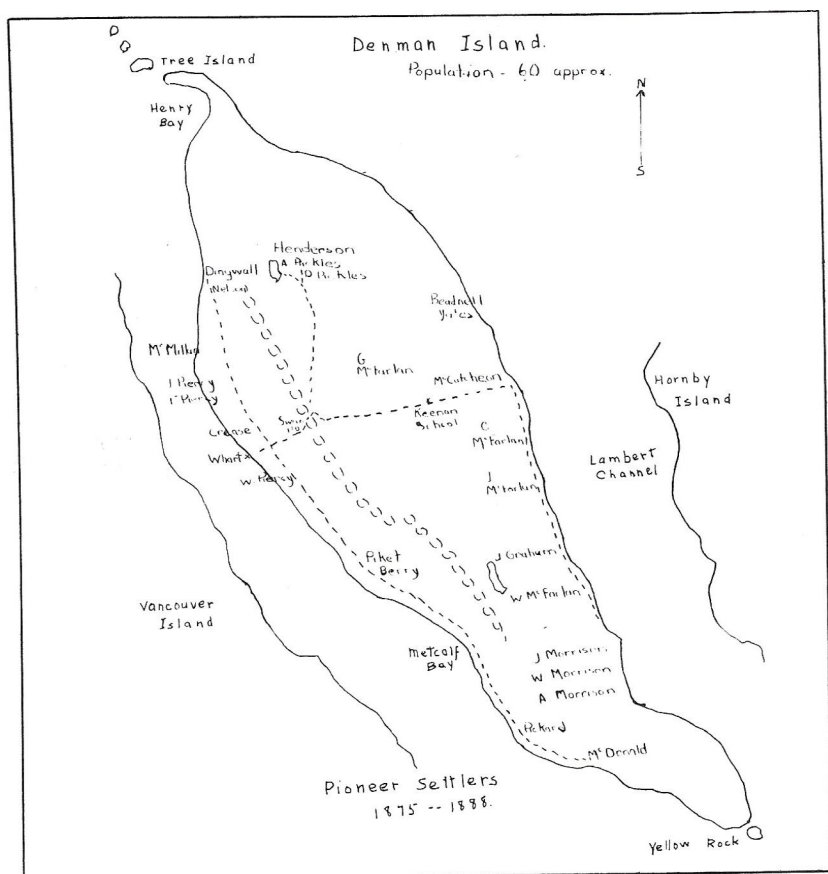
Daily mail came around 1940 and in 1950 rural mail delivery was started. Mr. and Mrs. E. Kent had the first contract.

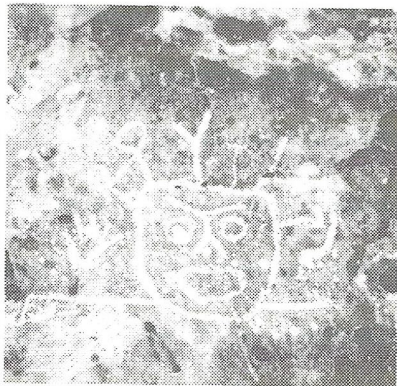
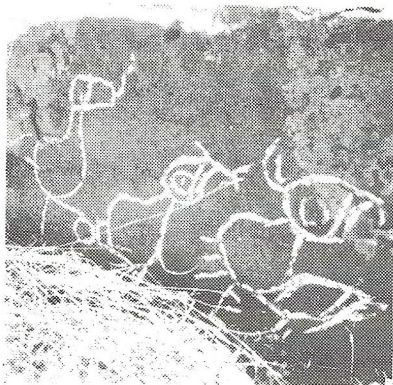
S.G. Ryall took over the store and post office from P. J. Doheny in 1932 and from that time the different store proprietors have handled the mail.



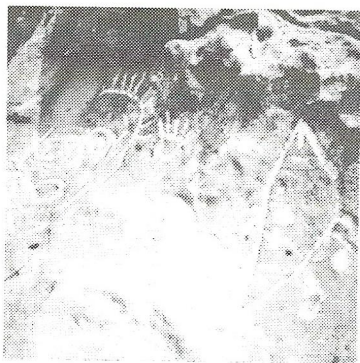


Map of Denman Island with post office marked as "Quadra".  
1878 - 1902.

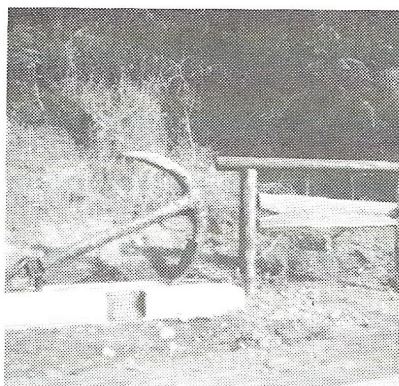




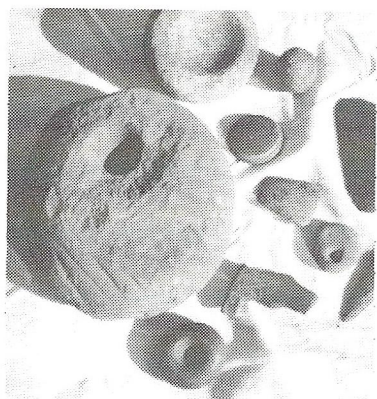
Petroglyphs on Yellow or Chrome Rock.



Face, probably a chief's as radiating lines indicate two large fish appear to be whales.



This anchor was recovered October 22, 1972 from S.S. Alpha, wrecked off Yellow Rock, Dec. 20, 1900.



Indian relics found on Denman Island.



Lighthouse near Denman Wharf after connecting trestle dismantled.



## Surveys

Some extracts from an 1887 field book of George Drabble - Provincial Land Surveyor.

Old survey notes were discovered in January, 1960, by Gordon G.H. Wagner, British Columbia Land Surveyor, while conducting a survey of the Denman Island School property.

The small book, 3" x 5", is written in pencil and was the book George Drabble used to record the surveys and road supervision he did on Denman Island. It was labelled "Completed March 2nd, 1887".

First entry is entitled "Survey of Hon. Justice Crease cleared Land of Late Rodello" in which he records data gathered in the field during a survey of a portion of the stated property.

On March 1, 1887, George Drabble records measurements for "Mr. Justice Crease's lines for "Church Lot". Also in the same book George Drabble records the measurements for the School Site. This would appear to have been surveyed during the year 1887 and was in the same location as the Denman Island school stands at this date, and from the survey notes the size of the Lot is the same as it is today. The school was built at the time of the survey. There might be some doubt as to the date of this school survey, as there is no date ascribed to the pages of the school survey, but merely the overall date of the book.

In another field book of George Drabble, dated August 25, 1885, survey notes appear for survey of road to top of Sandstone Mountain and another notation of road from wharf to McMillan's landing with side note "bridge destroyed by fire". This is also dated August 25, 1885.

Later in the same field book is the following preliminary draft notice prepared by George Drabble and it is recorded here just as it was written in his note book.

### Denman Island

Road from Pickard to Wharf

Specification of work to be performed

To cut out all fallen timber, to clear width of 14 feet along the centre distance and all underbrush to within 6 inches of level of Road for the full width of 14 feet -- a distance of 4 and one-half miles or thereabouts.

To build one small bridge 20 feet wide where the road crosses Section 19. The work to be completed to the satisfaction of the Chief of the Commissioner of Lands and Works or his Agent before the 1st day of November next. Tender to state amount in one sum and be sent addressed to the undersigned on or before Thursday the 3rd day of September next.



Lowest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

Comox, August 25th, 1885 - George F. Drabble Government Agent.

Another and similar note appears in the same book:

"Denman Island Cross Road.

Road to cut from top of mountain hill on the North side of the present cross road to intersect the same at a blazed Cedar or distance of 34 chains more or less from the starting point.

The Road to be cut 14 feet wide all trees standing on line of road to be grubbed or chopped not less than 6 inches below general grade of the road. All knoles to be levelled off and hollows filled in and surface graded to a uniform width of 9 feet and all large rocks thrown off the road and roots cut down to level of the grade.

A culvert to be built at crossing of Swans Ditch 3 feet deep, 3 feet wide and covered 14 feet wide in the clear.

The work to be completed to the satisfaction of the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works or his Agent on or before the 1st day of November next.

Tender to state amount in one sum and be sent to the undersigned on or before Thursday the 3rd day of September next.

The lowest tender not necessarily accepted.

Comox - August 25th, 1885.

George F. Drabble  
Government Agent".

"Note end - 12 feet to be fir wood at East end of McFarlan's Bridge".

Continuing in the same book and headed

"Denman Island Cross Road (Blasting)"

"On hill near Swan's House commencing at stake marked 1 to the North side of blazed red Fir tree standing on top of Hill a distance 106 feet. From a straight line drawn from 1 to the tree -- all rock to be blasted and removed to the level of the present grade so as to leave a clear width of 14 feet taken at a right angles line along its outer length, and to slope the side of rock when done to have a bother of not less than 1 foot in 6 feet perpendicular height.

All overhanging rocks to be removed.

A stringer of not less than 15" diameter and 50 feet long to extend from the blazed Red Fir down hill and properly secured to form a backing to support the outer side of Road which is to be raised with the debris of the rocky side 1 foot higher than its opposite side the entire length of the 106 feet.

The work to be completed to the satisfaction of the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works or his Agent before the 1st day of November 1885.

Tender to state amount in one sum and be sent to the undersigned on or before Thursday September 3rd next.

The lowest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

Comox - August 25th, 1885.

George F. Drabble  
Government Agent."

## Early Elections

The first election in the Comox-Alberni district was in 1871 with a single polling station at Comox to serve the whole area. In 1882 a second polling station was set up at Denman Island where 17 persons voted. In 1900 there were 20 on the list and by 1911 there were 30 voting for a Member of Parliament in the Federal election; (158 voted in 1974).

Candidates for both Provincial and Federal elections visited the island and everyone turned out for a political meeting. About half of the settlers claimed to be Liberal and the rest were Conservative and about the only time they argued was at election time.

Two Scotsmen who were neighbours loved to play tricks on each other. One was a staunch Liberal and the other was just as staunch a Conservative. One day it so happened that the Liberal was at the wharf when the Conservative candidate arrived. The latter noticed the Liberal standing by his Model T Ford and naturally supposed him to be the Conservative who was to meet him, so he introduced himself. The two discussed politics as they drove to the Liberal's home. After dinner the Liberal phoned his neighbour and informed him that he had been entertaining his candidate.

One Member of Parliament who was re-elected a number of times used to visit the island and spend the night at a friend's home. The little girl of the house while making his bed always found a \$5 bill under the pillow. She was very happy to have him visit as children saw very little money in those days.

## Letters and Reports

A report of Denman Island doings as published in *The Weekly News*, predecessor of The Comox District Free Press, on January 17th, 1894.

"There was a social party at W. Cheney's on New Year's. It was conducted with the usual characteristic earnestness. It was a good time, and the best of all there was the absence of accursed alcohol.

"There was a lively party at Mt. Pleasant. One who attended said it took all the blues out of him.

"The McFarlan men have laid the foundation of a saw and grist mill. It will be completed in the spring. Water power will drive it.

"The entertainment in aid of the hall building came off at the advertised time. It was a complete success. Long before the appointed hour the crowd commenced gathering and by the time it commenced every seat was occupied.

"The concert opened by an instrumental duet by Miss M. Beadnell and Miss Smith, followed by a song by J. Piket and A. Pearse. A repetition was demanded. Miss Beadnell sang to a piano accompaniment. John Ford played the violin so acceptably as to receive an encore. Then there was a song by Mrs. Beadnell. J. Piket rendered a song so captivatingly that he was asked to do it again. Dr. Westwood tried his practised hand in "de Fiddle an' de bow" and was asked to come again.

"A. Pearse's rich, deep voice was next heard in song. Mr. Reese of Union invoked pleasing music from a flute. For variation, W. Baikie read a well selected piece. Then came J. Piket with one of those songs which made everyone want to hear it again. John Ford changed the order by a tune on the violin. Dr. Westwood made everyone his debtor by a song. Another song by J. Piket followed, and also by Dr. Westwood. A dialogue between W. Baikie and J. Ford was then produced, and then all joined in the national anthem God Save the Queen.

"A vote of thanks was accorded Mr. Hawkins as chairman. Refreshments, which had been kindly provided by Mrs. J. Piket and Mrs. F. Beadnell, were then passed around, after which two members of the Union string band furnished the music for the dance which was most enjoyable.

"A goodly sum was realized, and everybody went home pleased and wishing it would not be too long before another similar event. In fact it was never known before what a good time one could have in building a hall. When this one is up, it is supposed they will be anxious to build something else."



Excerpts taken from letters written by Miss E. Coghlan, (who taught school on Denman Island for seven years) to her young friend, Selena Piercy who was working as nurse maid for Captain and Mrs. William Troup in Victoria.

Denman Island, B.C.  
February 27th, 1890

Dear Lena,

Amidst the hurry and burry and fluster of our densely populated and active island, you will of course know I arrived here all safe and started my work following Monday. The McFarlans drove over and met me more than half way the first week. I am very thankful for that, for my pedal extremities almost refuse to carry me. I am feeling very well, in fact I feel all over tonight there is not a bone in my body but what is aching. I go along the road at a very proper and lady-like manner.

Willie is up to the eyes in business, he and Nels are going into dog fishing, along with other things.

Parts of another letter written December 13th, 1889.

Dear Lena,

The children's examination is approaching, also our little social in the school house on Christmas Eve. It is trying to snow, the girls are talking and laughing and the boys are playing leap-frog and it is time to commence work after lunch.

At last Mrs. D. Pickles has her jacket made. I had the task and I flatter myself she looks well in it and pays me for the trouble I had over it, which was no small amount I assure you. All your people are well and the new house is progressing rapidly.

Last night I had to go around to D. Pickles to instruct him in the secrets of our proceedings. It rained torrents and I got benighted and had to wait at Mrs. Abraham Pickles until he came with a lantern to see me home.

Our bi-monthly event is the arrival of the parson, Mr. Stevens from Comox. He came down on Saturday wrapped in as many coats as an onion with a white choker, a few yards of flannel, a blue muffler around his neck, a cloud around his head. He really did look very badly and I felt extremely sorry for him. He was a very interesting invalid, he had to have his tonsils out. In spite of all he preached something nice and soothing, looking more like an angel than ever.

As I was looking through the window this morning I saw a picture which I would fain have painted, it struck me as decidedly ludicrous as well as appropriate to life in the far west. A farmer's wife on a rainy morning having just distributed the morning meal to a variegated flock of chickens, stands with a white rag on her head and watches their manoeuvres with an air of apparent satisfaction as she looked. I fancy she thought those hens eat well and the weather mild therefore they should

lay well, that eggs being a good price, it should pay well etc. etc. all those thoughts went through my noodle in a moment of abstraction.

When are you coming home, soon I hope as we miss you, would it not be possible for you to come just for a week?

Best wishes for the festive season,

Your friend,  
Miss E. Coghlan.

Miss Coghlan taught school on Denman Island from 1888 - 1895. She boarded at Mr. and Mrs. A. McMillan's home and had to walk over four miles to the school. In summer she rode her bike. She apparently liked the island and she took an active part in its community life. For a short time her sister Norah stayed with her and attended school. Miss Coghlan was very popular and added much to life of the sparse settlement.

## Denman Island Templars

The Robson Lodge of the Independent Order of the Good Templars was organized on Denman Island in August 1892 and continued until May 1894.

The roll call included the following Brothers and Sisters as they were called: Maggie Piercy, 1st secretary, Flora Keenan, 2nd secretary; W. Baikie 3rd secretary; Nellie Piket, Gertie Piket, J. Piket, W. Keenan, J. Keenan, Selena Piercy, T.H. Piercy, Wes Piercy, Fred Piercy, Harvey Piercy, A. Graham, J. Graham, E. Graham, H. McFarlan, R. Swan, A. Swan, W. Grieve, W. Grieve, M. Ball, S. Doney, W. Cheney, G. Cowie, P. McSellen, T. Nelson, G. McFarlan and Miss E. King. Members from Hornby Island were Fred Sutton, Caroline Sutton, S. Sutton, W. Ford, T. Ford, J. Ford and Maria Ford.

Lengthy programs followed the regular business at the weekly meetings. Like this one -- Reading from the Epsy Dixi newspaper by W. Baikie; music by Brother W. Ford; recitation by Brother J. Scott; speech on fishing Brother W. Baikie; speech on ploughing by Brother G. McFarlan; speech on weather by Brother J. Scott; reading by Brother W. Baikie; duet Sisters Maggie Piercy and Nellie Piket.

Another program was reading by Brother J. Scott; song by Brother J. Piket; song by Brother J. Ford; music by Brother J. Grieve; mathematical problems by Brother Tom Piercy; song by Brother W. Baikie; essay by Brother T. Nelson; poem by Brother A. Swan.

The three members elected editors of the newspaper Epsy Dixi were Sister E. King, and Brothers M. Ball and J. Ford.

There were debates and dialogues, duets and literary contests. The subject of one debate was: "Which is most conducive to civilization --

the pen or the sword?" Brother Baikie upheld the pen while Brother Ball upheld the sword. A vote was taken and the pen won.

There was no mention of refreshments but attendance averaged 20. Quarterly fees were 50 cents for males and 25 cents for minors and Sisters.

One of the chief objectives of the society was to fight against the granting of licences for the sale of spirituous liquors.

The most controversial feature in the constitution of the order was Article 2 which pledged members to abstain from strong drink. The order also fought hard against the very remunerative but illegal practice of supplying liquor to Indians.

In 1884 the Valley Bateman of the Good Templars was formed in the Comox Valley district to fight "the demon drink". It was one of the first organizations formed north of Nanaimo. It flourished for eleven years until in 1895 the Comox charter was surrendered and one of the most colourful organizations of the Valley passed away.

#### HALL OF ROBSON LODGE NO. 52 I.O. of G.T.

AUGUST 2, 1892

Meeting called to order for the purpose of instituting a lodge of I.O. of G.T. District Deputy J.V. Nicholls presiding. Aims and object of the order explained by District Deputy and then proceeded to institute.

Brothers T.H. Piercy, W. Piercy, F. Piercy and M. Ball also Sisters S. Piercy, N. Piket, G. Piket were admitted by card, and declared duly instituted by District Deputy. Proceeded to institute Maggie Piercy, Flora Keenan, Harve Piercy, J.W. Keenan, William Baikie, James Graham, G.A. Graham, Theodore Nelson, Ed Graham.

Recess declared to congratulate new members.

Business resumed. Election of Officers. PC Sister Nellie Piket; CT Brother T. Piercy; VT Brother Ball; Secretary Sister M. Piercy; F secretary Brother Baikie; Treasurer, Sister S. Piercy; Chaplain, Brother Nelson; Marshall, Sister G. Piket, Guard, W. Piercy; Sentinel, W. Keenan; AS Flora Keenan; D M James Graham.

Officers were duly installed by District Deputy. CT Brother Piercy then took the chair. On motion of Lodge Sister N. Piket was recommended as Lodge Deputy.

Appointments of Committees, Visiting CT. Brothers A. Graham and W. Keenan and Sisters G. Piket and Flora Keenan.

Finance - Brothers Ball, Nelson and J. Graham.

Music - Sisters Piket, Piercy, Keenan and Brothers Ball, Baikie and A. Graham.

Room - Brothers Ball, Baikie and F. Piercy.

After a few remarks from D.D.C.T. and Brother Baikie lodge was closed in due form at 11 o'clock. On motion lodge was named Robson Lodge No. 52.

August 9, 1892 - Following the business there was a Good of the Order Program: Songs, Brothers Nicholls, Whitehead and Ball. Recitation,



Brother Taylor; Speech, Brother Baikie; Single blessedness, Brother Nicholls; Married life, Brother Ball; Love, Brother Baikie; Love from experience, Brother Whitehead.

Closing, motion to adjourn, carried. Receipts for the evening \$1.

Number of members present 16, visitors 2.

Signed

Maggie A. Piercy, Secretary

Flora Keenan Assisting Secretary

## Essay on Denman Island, B.C.

WRITTEN BY WILLIAM BAIKIE, 1894

Denman Island is situated in the Gulf of Georgia some 50 miles north of Nanaimo. It is bounded on the west by Baynes Sound and Vancouver Island, on the east by Lambert Channel and Hornby Island, on the south by the Gulf of Georgia and on the north by Nob Hill, Comox and Cape Lazo. Its size is about 13 miles long and around 3 and one-half miles wide at the widest part. The highest part of the mountain which runs down the centre from one end of the island to the other is some 300 or more feet. It is utterly useless for agricultural purposes. The island is partially covered with timber and there are several large marshes and lakes. The timber is chiefly red fir, cedar, white fir, also maple, hemlock and alder.

The population is somewhere around a hundred, all engaged in farming, with the exception of the school teacher who has started keeping house, which is a good idea and it is rumored about that there will be orange blossoms soon, so he must mean business.

Denmanites as a class are well to do, even most of them are well to do. There being some good farming land and the older settlers have good places if they only knew it.

There are all sorts of nationalities, English, Scotch, Irish, 2 Norwegians one Yankee and a lot of Canadians from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia who are of British origin.

The island contains one church which was built by the energetic efforts of the Rev. W.W. Baer, and the settlers at the present time have a church service once every three weeks and Sunday School every Sunday except when there is a service. There is also a school house but to all appearances it doesn't look like one but it is to be hoped we will have a new one by another year as our M.P.P. has said as much. There is also a new public hall being erected by the efforts of the young people of Denman Island. The older ones laying back on their oars and looking on. It will fill a want that has long been felt socially as a place of amusement and instruction.

There is lots of game on the island, deer, grouse, ducks, geese and trout and fish. Looking at Denman from a geological point of view, it shows signs of coal all over, there being coarse sandstone on the mountain and under that we find shale on either side of the mountain and then on the west beach we find fine sandstone with small layers of coal. At both ends we find the remains of extinct volcano with conglomerate formations. The island has never been bored for coal yet, solely on account of some good capital.

We have a weekly mail here, the postmaster being Mr. Robt. Swan, one of our foremost farmers. Our principal market is Union, a thriving little town sprung up in a few years. We also have a good market in Nanaimo, another coal town. Farming land is mostly taken up on the island and what is not taken up is held for speculators.

Logging could be done on their land if any one was energetic enough to undertake it. There are good belts of timber which could be had at reasonable rates from the settlers. We stand much in need of a sawmill here and by all accounts our enterprising neighbours, McFarlan Bros. are going to set one a going. They have already got an Overshot water wheel a running which does good work in crushing grain.

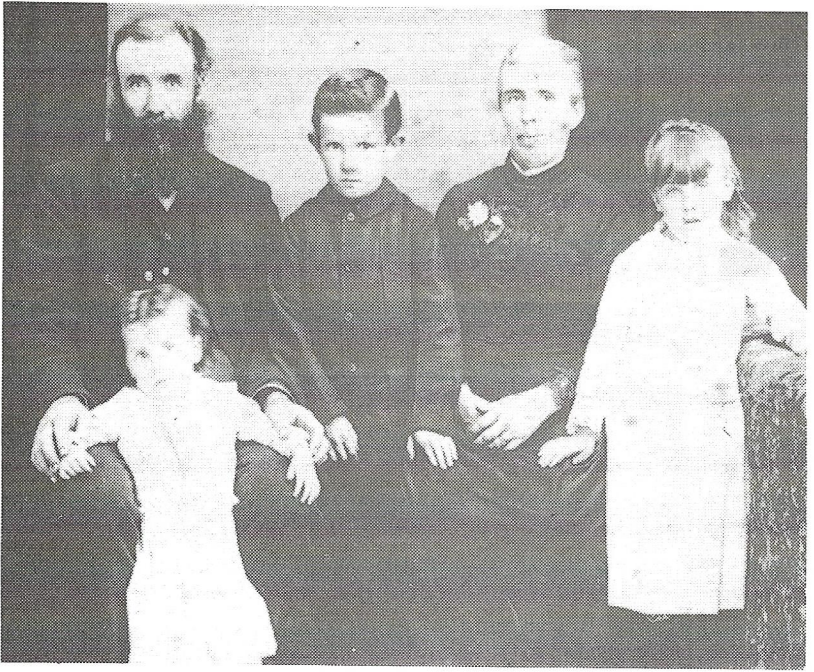
The roads on this island are getting in good shape. When we get a good frost or heavy snow we get a yearly allowance of about 700 or 800 hundred dollars. The government also pays our school teacher, which is a good thing, I mean a good thing for him. At the present time we have Mr. T.W. Robbins as teacher, he being extremely popular. He has organized a night school for the benefit of the young people which they enjoy very much. We also have a number of cranks too tedious to mention.

## The McMillan Family

Alex McMillan was a native of Argyleshire, Scotland, and after spending some years in New Zealand he came to British Columbia in the early 1870s. On the advice of Alex Urquhart, whom he met on the boat coming across from New Westminster, he stopped off to visit the district and while so doing secured the work of constructing the first Comox wharf. In 1874 he visited Denman Island where he bought out Jim McCoy who had pre-empted a 320-acre holding on the west side of the island with its half mile of beach frontage by Village Point, a dangerous reef. A buoy marks this spot where several ships have run aground during the years.

Alex McMillan was a very canny Scot and a hard worker so he soon established himself. In those early days before a wharf was built the steamer would stop if a settler rowed his produce out on a raft, and often





Alex McMillan, Johnny, Mrs. McMillan and Maggie, in front Mabel.



Annie Pickles

Arthur  
1904.

David Pickles





Mabel McMillan, George Dalziel, Peggy Hamilton and Maggie McMillan, Jessie Fisher and Stanley Milton, 1910.



Denman's first team of horses owned by George McFarlen.



Charlie McFarlen, centre, on the S.S. City of Nanaimo.



Mrs. Abraham Pickles.



The McMillan home.

cattle would be dumped off as close to shore as possible so they could swim ashore.

It so happened one day when Alex was on his raft that a young Scottish lady was aboard the steamer. She was on her way to Comox to visit the Robb family and she was very impressed by this handsome young man. She decided to remain in the district and not return to San Francisco where she had been employed as a cook. Eventually she became Mrs. Alex McMillan.

Neighbours were few and far between with only half a dozen families settled in isolated spots on the island and the life of the early farmer was far from being easy but this vivacious young woman soon proved to be a capable wife, gardener, practical nurse and community leader.

During the summer months when there was plenty of pasture the cows were milked and butter sold from the cream but during the winter months the calves ran with the cows. In 1887 the McMillans had some 21 head of stock and that same year they had the misfortune to have their house destroyed by fire so when William Baikie arrived on Denman in 1888, Alex hired him for a year for \$250 with board and washing. A substantial two-storey house was built to replace the first cabin and this house (now Gordon Wright's) is still in fairly good condition and is one of the very few remaining pioneer homes.

Some of Denman's earliest school teachers boarded with Mrs. McMillan and, accompanied by the three McMillan children, Johnny, Maggie and Mabel, walked over four miles to school.

Each year more and more land was cleared and cultivated until with the help of the family and with better farming machinery the homestead became one of the most productive on the island. Their herd of Jerseys was one of the best in the province during the early part of 1900s and World War I.

Mrs. McMillan had the pleasure of revisiting her old home in Scotland. The family suffered a great shock and loss when Johnny died in 1911 at the age of 30. In 1908, Gavin Russell, a native of Glasgow, Scotland, who was working in Vancouver came to visit the Dalziel family. In 1912 he married Maggie McMillan and they bought the portion of the homestead situated above the public road. E. Westwood owns part of this property today. Although unaccustomed to country life he tackled the job of clearing the land and making ready for the building of a modern home and barn. With his wife's experience they soon had an orchard and garden and were farming in a small way.

Mrs. McMillan and Mabel continued to run the homestead after Alex passed away. Dairy farming on Denman was at a high peak during this period and hired help had been kept for a number of years. Alf Randall, who later married Mabel, was an experienced cow man and they carried on shipping cream and milk to the Comox creamery.

After Mabel passed away Alf sold the property to Gordon Wright in



May 1952 who named the place "Lone Pine Farm". He made many improvements and built a modern home in 1957 nearer to the beach. Gordon built two large barns and of the 150 acres purchased he has over half in cultivation. This is the most progressive farm on the island with a large herd of beef cattle, mostly Herefords. He runs beef at Green Ridge Farm on Lacon road. This farm includes the Bergener place and the original William Wright home property.

## The Pickles Family

David Pickles left his home in Yorkshire, England and travelled to Vancouver Island via San Francisco early in the year 1869. In Victoria he met a Robert Swan and eventually both men met again at the Baynes Sound coal mine which was situated several miles inland from Fanny Bay on Vancouver Island.

David was a surveyor by profession and found employment surveying the land and working on the tramway which ran to the salt water. The mine closed down in 1876 after less than a year's operation and several of the unemployed men decided to pre-empt land on Denman Island across the two-mile stretch of water of Baynes Sound.

Dave had visited this almost uninhabited, heavily timbered island several times and had picked a large marsh in the centre of the island as a suitable spot to homestead.

He made the necessary improvements and built a log cabin in order to obtain title to 160 acres and later pre-empted another 160 acres. In 1876 Dave's brother Abraham and family arrived and bought land adjoining his and bordering Chickadee Lake. Kenneth Henderson, who had worked as a fellow machinist with Abraham at Yale, British Columbia, for the Canadian Pacific Railway, purchased property on the opposite side of the lake.

The same year Robert Swan pre-empted 160 acres on the west side of the island. Around 1888, John Ford who was farming on Hornby Island, took a trip to his home town, London, England. When he returned he brought his widowed sister, Mrs. L. Green and her daughter, Annie Green, along. It was too stormy for the steamer to call at Hornby so the party landed at the Denman wharf.

Dave had his horse and buggy so he kindly offered to drive them across Denman. Later when the storm subsided they rowed to Hornby. Annie frequently visited on Denman and Dave was impressed with this young English girl. She taught school for two terms at Beaver Creek near Alberni. In 1891 he persuaded her to become his wife.

After many years of pioneering, long hours spent clearing the land



with oxen and cultivating the soil, Dave had a productive farm established. An orchard was planted. He took his produce to Union Bay or to the thriving town of Union, and sometimes he made the trip to Nanaimo with the McFarlans in their schooner.

His wife in early days used to drive a team of oxen, harnessed to a home-made cart to the wharf to pick up provisions, Abraham had constructed the cart with great planked wheels which clanked on their iron axles as the oxen made slow progress along the gravel roads. She carried a pitchfork along to herd off wild stock along the way. The Pickles family of three sons and three daughters were a great help on the farm. Maud, (Mrs. J. McGee) drove the oxen and horses for her father. In 1909 David Pickles passed away at the age of 69.

He was one of Denman's earliest settlers and today his son Ernest is still living on the original homestead, although some years ago he sold the land to Walter Schmidt who is continuing to farm it. The log house was inadequate by 1911 for the growing family so a new house was built. During the summer the boys fished part time and worked on the roads. They were all expert hunters.

The large marsh, locally known as the "Swale", flooded every winter making spring ploughing so late that they decided to drain the surface water off. Jack Doney was hired to dig a deep ditch to drain the pond situated near the house. After much work he ran into rock so the project was abandoned.

Years later around 1924, the three boys and their cousin Harry Pickles undertook to make a new ditch straight north from the pond up to the rock cut, a distance of nearly a mile. They blew it with high explosives to a depth of eight feet and at the rock cut they drilled and blasted a passage 200 feet at the base, tapering to a peak. The ditch was then headed in a southern direction so the water drained towards Mosely's place and eventually into Little George creek to the sea. This took two or three years to complete and proved a fairly successful venture, but today little trace of it can be found.

Around 1914 the Squamish Logging Company bought and logged the Pickles timber. The boys worked at the logging operation for four or five years. The two older girls, Bessie and Maud, had married and May became a school teacher and taught several terms on Denman before moving to Vancouver.

Mrs. Pickles took an active interest in the community and Anglican church. She was local correspondent for the Comox Argus newspaper for many years. She spent her later years with her daughters in Vancouver and Victoria.

The homestead was divided for the boys and in 1936 a community bee was held to build a barn on Bert's place. A large crew of men arrived to frame the building and by supper the floor was laid and a barn dance was held in the evening. The ladies supplied the food and Jackson Ar-

thurs came from Hornby to play the accordion for the dance, which proved to be a long remembered event.

In 1944 Arthur Pickles bought the Harry Gordon property at the northern end of the island and obtained the first oyster lease on Denman. With spawn from Japan he started the island's oyster industry. He sold the land and lease in 1954 and, in 1975 still lived in retirement in his small home near the general store and post office.

May's daughter, Wilma Hartnagal (nee Seip), is a third-generation school teacher in the Pickles family. She received her Bachelor of Education Degree at the University of British Columbia in May 1975. Maud's granddaughter, Dianne Thames, received a similar degree at the University of Victoria recently.

## The McFarlan Family

The McFarlan brothers who pre-empted large holdings along the shore line of the east side of Denman Island were all experienced axemen from New Brunswick. They came to the island with Mr. and Mrs. John McCutcheon in 1876 and they soon cleared enough land to build their cabins, plant their gardens and set out a small orchard with the fruit trees they brought with them. Half a dozen of the trees in Mrs. Jerrard's orchard today are what remains of these old varieties, namely Glory Mundy, Bellflower, Pipins and Astrakhan.

These enterprising men, referred to as the "Woodpeckers" by Eric Duncan in his book "From Scotland to Vancouver Island," soon had an overshot water wheel set up to power a small sawmill, where they cut rough lumber, and a grist mill to crush grain. The twins, Charlie and Walter built a schooner around 1884 to transport their produce and stock to Nanaimo and to bring back necessary staples and tools. The sails were designed and hand sewn by George Heatherbell of Hornby Island. The schooner was used until the wharf was built and the steamer called regularly.

John Graham who was a brother-in-law to these ambitious men, split durable cedar shingles and he maintained they never rotted, but simply wore out and would stand weatherproof on a square pitch roof for over forty years without repairs, especially if left unpainted.

George McFarlan had the first team of horses and buggy on the island. His property was in from the cemetery, later known as Mosely's.

In 1896 Charlie sold out his property to Tom and Jack Chalmers, who came to visit William Baikie, who had been their neighbour in Orkney, Scotland. Charlie had recently married a girl from Hornby and instead of establishing a new home on Denman he decided to move to the Hawaiian Islands. His mother Catherine, his brothers George and

John, and John's daughter Mary Jane accompanied them. Walter and his wife remained on Denman. In 1899 Charlie and family and George returned to British Columbia where they farmed in the Fraser Valley and at Saanich until 1913 when they came back to Denman and took up residence on Walter's property.

John and his daughter remained in Hawaii where Catherine died near her 100th year. Howard, John's son, returned to Denman in 1905 and farmed his father's place after spending many years logging on the island.

Charlie passed away around 1917 but his wife and three sons and three daughters worked hard to build up a good dairy farm. The girls married and Ned and Jim had places of their own. Fred carried on the farm for a number of years until Ned took over. He finally sold to a real estate company. Today it is all subdivided into beach lots below the road and larger lots are being sold from this original 320 acre pioneer holding. A number of new settlers are building homes or summer cottages here.

## The Piket Family

In 1878, following the closure of the Baynes Sound coal mine, Tom Pickard moved to Denman Island and took up land at Barcroft Flats near Metcalfe Bay. When his relatives, Mr. and Mrs. John Piket and infant son Tom, arrived on the monthly boat from Victoria, he propelled his raft out to meet them. The Pikets were from Nottingham, England, but the sight of the island's wilderness did not discourage this young city woman who proved herself to be a true pioneer in every sense of the word. With a few head of stock and a garden these people made a start and on one occasion Mrs. Piket went by canoe to Nanaimo to have her baby. They raised two sons and four daughters and their nearest neighbours were Indians from the Comox tribe who spent their summers camping at Metcalfe Bay.

Tom Pickard opened the first store in 1886 at "The Flats". Around this time Peter Berry broke up partnership with W. Robb and went to live with the Pikets and when he died he willed his property to Tom Piket.

In 1890 Mrs. Piket branched out and took over the Company boarding house at Union Mines (Cumberland) and for many years afterwards provided meals and accommodation for all with a firm and ample hand. She was very kindly and took a personal interest in her lodgers but when she said anything she meant it. Her husband grew all the vegetables she needed and she used to row across from Fanny Bay to get them and row back and load them on her horse. She liked riding and often rounded up their stock on horseback. Tom Pearce and C. White rented the farm on Denman for a time.



Mrs. Piket built the first hotel in Cumberland but later it was destroyed by fire. Her husband built a Halfway House on the Cumberland to Courtenay road in 1914 and it was so strategically located that almost all travellers between Courtenay and Cumberland found it convenient to pause to refresh man and beast at the Piket home.

The Piket family moved to Cumberland. Tom had married and he and his wife and three young sons moved back to Denman around 1912 to the property Peter Berry had willed to him. With much hard work the place was built up and stocked and soon the farm was productive again.

Tom and a carpenter named Blanchard built a new home to replace the old house which had burned down while Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Dumaesq had it rented. Blanchard also built new homes for Arthur Dumaesq and Tony Tessaro. Tom and his brother Len logged his property. A daughter and three sons were added to the family and Mrs. Piket who was an efficient homemaker and excellent cook found time to churn butter for sale and make weekly trips to Cumberland with their farm produce. Tom was active in community matters for years, and after he died the place was sold. The family all moved away and recently the home was destroyed by fire. Their youngest son, Harold was captain on the Denman Island ferry for years.

## The Morrison Family

Johnny and Bill Morrison and their sister Ann pre-empted several tracts of land at the south end of the island in 1877. Bill and Ann did not stay long but Johnny lived here until around 1910. He batched and lived more or less a hermit, being rather eccentric.

Ann married Mr. Rogers of the famous Roger's Chocolates Confectionery on Government Street, Victoria. She sent Johnny groceries once a month via the steamer and he would drive his fawn horse and ox to the wharf to pick them up. The horse had a bell tied around its neck and school children often hid in the woods until the strange equipage passed. He carved a saddle out of wood.

One cold winter night Johnny knocked at William Baikie's door and asked for apples. There was a foot or more of snow on the ground and the apple house door had been banked with snow to keep the frost out. Mrs. Baikie prepared a meal for Johnny while he waited until William lit a lantern and with a shovel was able to clear the door way. Under most circumstances he would have refused to enter the building on such a night but he did not want to cross Johnny in any way. He was very pleased to get the apples and was thankful for a good supper before his long drive home in the dark.

A natural cave in the large beach rocks in front of his old home is

still known as Johnny Morrison's cave. The high bank above the cave is a beautiful spot; in spring time, masses of wild flowers cover the mossy ground. Dogtooth violets, beach coral, chocolate lilies, wild onion, can-nas, cowslips and numerous small beach flowers and shooting stars.

Johnny was a good workman and constructed a barn for his animals. He had a team of oxen and a fawn coloured horse which he locked in the barn at night. Johnny was on hand to help at Harve Piercy's barn-raising bee in 1909. He also worked on the road with other men when construction work was being done. Later his hermit-like existence affected his personality and he had to receive hospital treatment.

## Grand Old Man of Denman Island

Robert Taylor Swan was born in Scotland at the border town of Berwick-on-Tweed on April 3, 1847. He came to Canada with his parents when he was three, so he knew little of any country but Canada. He grew to manhood in New Brunswick, became a blacksmith and had the misfortune to lose an eye at the smithy.

He came west shortly after marrying Charlotte Warden, (a cousin of Colonel John Weightman Warden of the 102nd Battalion, "Wardens Warriors," stationed at Comox Spit in 1916).

Bob Swan, as he was known, arrived in Victoria in 1874 from San Francisco along with Will Dingwall and the young men set out to seek their fortunes. Their first job was removing graves from Johnson Street cemetery to a new location in the woods. The new cemetery land was given by James Douglas in 1858 and today is Pioneer Square, at the corner of Quadra and Meares streets.

Bob then went to the B.C. mainland where he worked on the Cariboo road and built bridges. He hand-logged at Harrison Lake, and helped clear the right of way for the Langley-Ladner section under a contractor named McLellan. It was through McLellan that Bob came to Vancouver Island, as he brought his crew along when he contracted to build the railway from Baynes Sound mine to Buckley Bay. Before coal was found at Union (Cumberland) John Dick sent out an English syndicate to work a coal seam on the Tsable River.

McLellan's crew arrived April 13, 1876, and started to build a narrow wooden gauge railway to tidewater but the money ran out as the development was never properly financed. For about six months the mine was in good production with an output of 50 tons a day. Some 55 hands were employed, the whites receiving \$2 a day and the 13 Chinese \$1 a day. Ships were loaded at the wharf at Buckley Bay but a slump came in the world market and the mine closed down after less than a year's operation.





Robert Swan's home. Mrs. B. Fulton and Muriel Dalziel, in front, Gwen and Beulah Fulton.



Mr. and Mrs. Robert Swan's 50th wedding anniversary. *Seated:* Frank, Mrs. Swan, Mr. Swan and A. H. (Sandy) Swan. *Back row:* W. S. (Sinky) Vina, Robbie, Iza, Jim and Nettie.





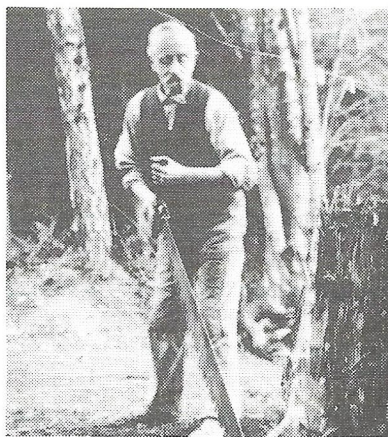
First bear hunt, June 1910. *Back row:* Jim Piercy, Alby Graham, Irvine Piercy, Ed. Graham. *Front row:* Jack Wood, Harvey Piercy, Howard McFarlan, Fred Piercy and Wes. Piercy.



Jack Wood's home, Wes Piercy's home and barn to the left.



Bob Swan.



Dr. Henry Meadows, 1912-1926.



George Cole and George Haynes were the partners in the mine which was eventually abandoned.

Bob Swan then turned to logging and worked at Gartley Beach where he felled timber using six oxen to draw the logs, the output being about 10,000 board feet a day with 3,000 board feet to a load.

He sold at \$4.50 per thousand. He had Jack Howe help him one day a week. Logging had just started in the Comox District. He then undertook to build the first jail in the district, situated near to the present St. Joseph's Hospital, Comox. Joe Rodella, residing near the Comox wharf, was policeman at the time. Bob also helped to build the first coal wharf for loading sailing ships at Union Bay. While at Comox he was one of the few white men to see an Indian Potlatch and the ceremony of making a doctor.

While working at the Baynes Sound mine, Bob had decided to eventually settle on Denman Island which was situated directly across Baynes Sound. It looked a good place to take up land, so early in 1878 he bought 160 acres on the west side of the island.

His wife arrived from New Brunswick before the house was ready so she stayed at Comox with a girl she knew from back east, (Isabella Grieve, later Mrs. Sam Piercy). When Mrs. Swan set up housekeeping on Denman, one of her wedding presents was a cow and an expectant sow. In time they established a farm and sold produce at Union and Nanaimo, where Simon Leiser's store was patronized.

Bob Swan was postmaster for many years, most of the time the post office being at the wharf where the steamers dropped the mail bags. He was proud to say that all the time he was postmaster there never was one complaint recorded against him. He looked after the ballot boxes at elections for 30 years, and served as school trustee for many years. He helped build the school and he hewed the timbers for the Methodist Church, which was built on a parcel of land he had donated, situated on the top of the mountain. Lumber left over from the buildings he used as a further free service to the community by making coffins.

Charlotte Swan was an accomplished seamstress and she made and sold wool-filled comforters and mattresses. Cash money was scarce but each fall new shoes were bought for all members of the family, along with needed clothing. At this time settlers had to row to Comox for supplies of staples until such time as there was a store at Union Bay. Furniture was handmade, even to the grooved washboard. Soap and tallow candles were also made at home.

When Mr. and Mrs. Swan arrived on Denman Island there were only six families but soon more settlers came. W. S. "Bob" Yates arrived in 1877 and pre-empted land on the east side, which eventually became the Beadnell and Swan property. The Swan's home and post-office which was situated below the mountain in what is now Grieder's field, burned down about 1895. The family moved to the Yates property on the east

side of the island and here they established another farm where they lived until they retired around 1917 after their five sons and four daughters had married. Another son was drowned in infancy. Most of the family resided on the island and their daughter Iza and her husband Bert Fulton took over the homestead and ran a dairy farm. Mr. and Mrs. Swan spent their later years in a beach cottage near the wharf. After his wife passed away in 1932 Bob lived with his son Sinky until he passed away in his 94th year, August 29, 1940. He had a wonderful memory and was a keen reader and he was a leading figure in all community affairs.

Three members of the original family are alive today (1975) James of Royston, W. S. (Sinky) of Nanoose and Vina Wade of Nanaimo.

## The Thomas Piercy Family

Among the many immigrants from Northumberland, England, who came to New Brunswick in 1837, were the newly wedded Matthew and Agnes Piercy. They endured many hardships getting established in this new country and raising a large family. After 30 years they decided to move once more to the west and took the long trip across the continent to San Francisco and up to Victoria by a freighter, where they had to wait for the steamer to make its monthly trip to Comox on Vancouver Island.

Four young sons and two little girls accompanied them as well as their married son Tom, his wife Jane and four small children, Alex, Belle, Lena and Wesley.

The Tom Piercys spent the first winter at Gartley Beach with their cousins and then moved to Denman Island in 1876, where they pre-empted 200 acres on the west side of the island facing Baynes Sound. The land was heavily timbered and after much hard work enough land was cleared to build a cabin and plant a garden, and acquire some stock.

There were only a few settlers scattered along the shore line and the children had over three miles to walk through the forest to school. Margaret was born April 23, 1878 and was the first white child born on the island. Harvey was born August 1, 1880 and was the first white boy born on Denman. Another son, James was born February 8, 1883, several months before the family decided to move back to the Comox Valley to be near a school and the rest of their relatives.

Five years later, in 1888, Tom decided to move back to his property on Denman as the older members of his family were grown up, able to help clear and cultivate the land and build a new home. A daughter Ellen and a son Irvine had arrived while they were at Comox and their youngest daughter, Rose was born July 27, 1890 on Denman. The eldest son, Alex, while working at Union, developed pneumonia and passed away at the age of 21.



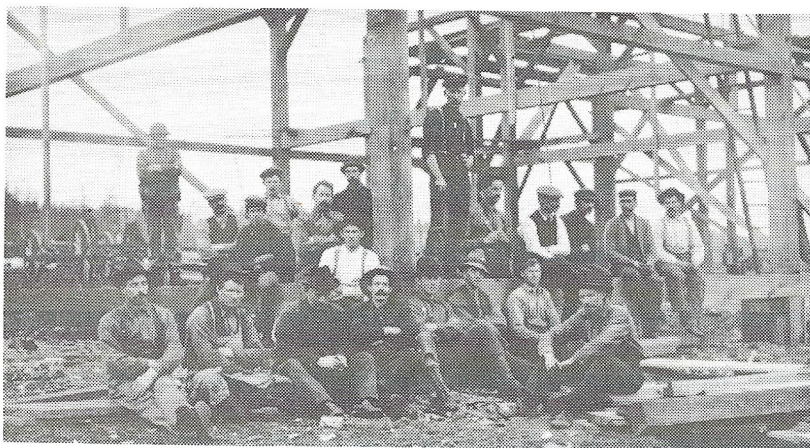


*Standing*; Rose Robertson, Harvey Piercy, Lena Baikie, Irvine Piercy, Nellie Frazer, Belle Cessford and Jim Piercy. *Seated*: Fred Piercy, Maggie Chalmers, Mrs. T. Piercy and Wesley Piercy. Photo taken 1930.



The Tom Piercy family taken in 1888. *Standing*: Fred, Belle, Alex, Lena and Wesley. *Seated*: Tom Piercy, Jane Piercy, Harvey. *Front row*: Maggie, Jim, Irvine (on Jane's knee) and Nellie.





Harvey Piercy's barn raising 1909. *Back:* Johnny Morrison, Jack Chalmers, Ray Chalmers, Jim Piercy, Jack Wood, Howard McFarlan, Jimmy Graham, Eddie Graham, George Dalziel, Tom Chalmers, Alby Graham, Sandy Swan. *Front:* Johnny Graham, Fred Piercy, Willie Baikie, Irvine Piercy, George Wood, Jim Swan, Dave Wotherspoon, Dave Corrigan and Harve Piercy.



Irvine Piercy with his Jersey calves.



First Tom Piercy reunion, June 30, 1962. Picnic on site of old ranch home.

Tom Piercy was the first Justice of the Peace, the first road foreman and was generally the kingpin of the island and its various improvements during the pioneer state and later when it became more developed. A number of new settlers had arrived.

Major items to his credit were the roads, school, church and logging industry. He was in early days advisor-in-chief to the rest of the island. He was the first lighthouse keeper at Yellow Rock and he also ran the post office from 1902 until his death in 1904. The family carried on with the post office for some years.

In 1900, a large orchard of some 1,000 trees was planted, mostly Gravensteins, King of Tomkins and Pippins along with pears, cherries and early varieties for home use. This orchard was one of the largest on the coast and it proved a good source of income for many years yielding 3,500 boxes of apples to pickers when at full production. Piercy Brothers won prizes at the Apple Show at Vancouver in 1910.

The Piercy home was called "The Ranch", as it was home to all visitors to the island. Naturally with five sons and five daughters, a number of young people used to gather and in later years Jane was called "Grannie Piercy" by young and old. Ministers boarded there and the peddler who arrived periodically from Vancouver made it his headquarters. He visited around the island, packing his heavy cases and the one little girls loved was the case with all the rings, brooches and necklaces.

Births, weddings and christenings were among the many happy events which took place in this home.

These industrious pioneers in time cleared and developed a fine farm. The sons were all good at sports and the whole family loved to dance. Margaret and Ellen played the organ and several of the boys played the violin.

At one time after World War I there were six Mrs. Piercys living on adjoining farms, after the sons had married. Three daughters married Denman men and lived on the island. Lena (Mrs. W. Baikie), Margaret (Mrs. Tom Chalmers) and Rose (Mrs. D. Robertson). Belle became Mrs. R. Cessford and lived in Cumberland and Ellen married Fred Peacock and lived in Seattle. Grandchildren from Seattle and Cumberland came for their holidays to the farm.

During her pioneer days, Grannie Piercy sewed all the clothing for her family, often by candle light. She took an active part in church work and a keen interest in community affairs and she made many a hasty trip to a neighbour's home or to members of her family to act as midwife.

Her quiet efficient manner which commanded respect and honour and her ability to cope with emergencies made her a true pioneer in every way. At her daughter Rose's wedding in 1912 she had the pleasure of having her whole family home once more.



A large picnic was held to celebrate Grannie's 90th birthday. She passed away in her 93rd year. She had kept a keen and active mind with a look to the future. She had spent her later days with her youngest son Irvine and his family on the original farm. She had made several trips back to visit relatives in New Brunswick.

The Canadian Broadcasting Company came and produced a film of the Piercy farm which was shown on their networks across Canada in 1966 called "Life and the Land."

Irvine passed away in 1969 at the age of 81. Today his wife Celena and his son Jack continue to reside on this historic ranch and celebrated its centennial in 1976. A son Wesley and family live on part of the Piercy farm and operate the farms at the time of writing. The eldest son George, is a retired doctor and resides at Comox. A sister, Zeta Bell and family have a summer home on a beach lot on part of beach frontage recently subdivided.

On June 30, 1962, the Piercy families held a reunion at "The Ranch" where the original house stood, and 200 descendants of Tom and Jane attended the picnic and the old time dance held at the community hall. Five years later on July 1, 1967 a second reunion was held on the same spot, under the large box elder trees which were grown from seeds Tom Piercy picked up in Minneapolis in 1874. Two of the original family, Irvine aged 79 and Rose aged 77 were among the 170 relatives.

Months of planning climaxed on Saturday, July 6, 1974 when approximately 450 of Matthew Piercy's descendants representing seven generations arrived at Grassy Point Farm, the Gartley Beach home of Jean and Tom Feely at Royston, for a reunion to commemorate the arrival of the Piercy family at this spot in 1874.

The Matthew Piercy family tree compiled by Merlie McGee, Nanette McPhee, Jean Berkeley, Verna Monks and Doreen Piercy and containing 748 names was on display at the registration office as was a Piercy centennial wall hanging containing the family crest made by Bill McKenzie.

Many camped in the shade of the trees by the riverbank. Tables were set up and everyone got together for a picnic lunch and supper. Each family branch was issued with different coloured identifying ribbons, and all introduced themselves at the calling of the clan. Harper Baikie was master of ceremonies for the afternoon activities and Wallace Baikie was MC for the dance which was held Saturday evening in Union Bay hall.

On Sunday afternoon the Rev. Ray Brandon conducted a service of commemoration and Thanksgiving in the shade of the oak trees by the old St. Andrew's Presbyterian church on Mission Hill, Sandwick. Matthew had donated part of the ground in 1876 for the site of the church. Wallace Baikie one of the senior descendants gave a short talk on the family heritage and Winnie Isbister played the hymns on the eighty-five year old original organ which was brought over for the occasion from the United Church on Denman Island.

A memorial cairn containing a plaque commemorating the arrival of the Matthew Piercy family in the Comox Valley in 1874 was unveiled by Lieutenant-Governor of B.C. Walter Owen. Plans were made to restore the old church for its centennial in 1977.

## The Beadnell Family

Less than a dozen pioneer families had settled on Denman Island when George David Beadnell arrived in 1888. He came from Warwick, England, where his father, Dr. G. Beadnell had a thriving practice in medicine. George had hoped to become a doctor but due to a childhood ailment, the hearing in one ear was impaired, and he did not follow a medical career.

At the age of 18 he left England for the United States, where for a year or two he was an apprentice on several large ranches. He came west to British Columbia to visit his uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Gladding at the new boom coal town of Union (now Cumberland).

While on a hunting trip to Denman Island, George was greatly intrigued by the climate and natural beauty of the island. He decided to stay around for a time, boarding at the John Piket farm. He wrote to his parents and his sister Maud in England telling them he had found an ideal spot in the west to settle.

Shortly afterwards they joined him and Dr. Beadnell purchased 200 acres of forest land from Bob Yates, situated on the east side of the island. This property had a beautiful creek meandering between great fir trees of the primeval forest. The half mile of beach frontage looked towards the magnificent snow-clad coast range of British Columbia, with Texada Island and Hornby Island in the foreground.

The estate was named "Fillongley" after the old Beadnell home in England. The Beadnells were of Welsh ancestry and George and his cousin Harry were raised at Aberystwyth, Wales.

The winter of 1889-1890 gave the district the heaviest snow fall on record, commencing in early December and it was still on the ground until well in April. Settlers were kept busy shovelling snow from buildings and trying to feed their stock. The Beadnell family in their newly constructed cabin spent most of their time trying to keep warm.

The land was slowly cleared and a big house was built on the top of the bank overlooking Lambert Channel. Fruit trees and gardens were planted and a barn built and in time a small farm was established.

Dr. Beadnell carried on his profession serving both Denman and Hornby Islands and often travelling by canoe as far as Comox as he was the only doctor in the district barring Union. He did yeoman service and

often without any remuneration and he was a greatly appreciated and highly respected member of the community.

Officers from the Royal naval ships stationed at Comox were often guests of the Beadnells while on hunting trips to the island.

Maud married Horace Smith of Comox and for a time they stayed at her old home while Horace was logging on Denman. They raised four sons, Harry, Guy, Arden, Darrell and a daughter, Marjorie. Dr. Beadnell retired in 1902 and he and Mrs. Beadnell moved to Comox. Always a keen fisherman, he built a cabin at Oyster River where he enjoyed annual fishing trips. A lover of nature, the doctor had among his books a collector's prize, Harris' Aurelian, a very old volume of paintings of English moths and butterflies. Each plate all hand-colored and painted, is dedicated to some titled dignitary of the day.

It was an English girl, Amy Bastin who came from England as governess to Maud's children whom George Beadnell subsequently married. Amy was an ardent gardener and her rhododendrons, roses and flower beds were a lovely sight. Masses of primroses and bluebells under the fruit trees and along the beach trail remain to this day.

George was a Justice of the Peace for many years during this period. In 1891, Harry Beadnell arrived on Denman to visit his uncle Dr. Beadnell and he purchased the J. McCutcheon place which adjoined the Beadnell estate. To reach the Beadnell home a private road wound its way along the beautiful wooded area adjacent to the beach through Harry's property. George Dalziel bought the Harry Beadnell place around 1907 and he later had the road moved to the line between his property and the Swan property known today as Swan road.

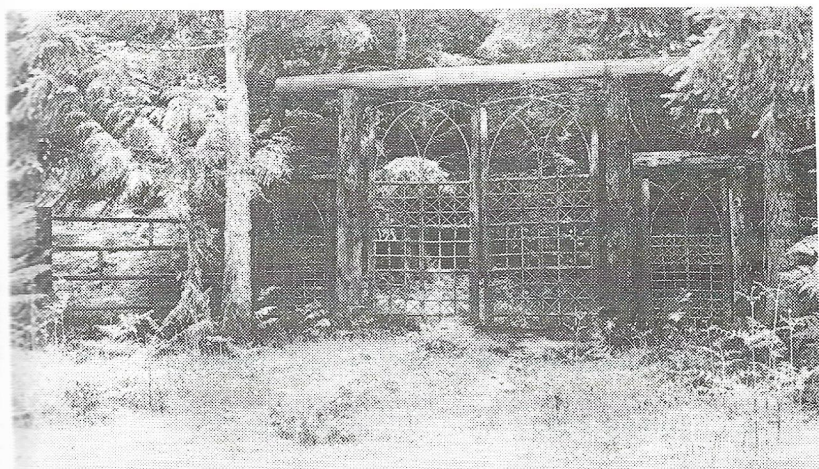
George was a skilled axeman, so he then proceeded to build a driveway through his magnificent stretch of primeval woodland, which bordered Little George Creek. With the help of his old horse "Star", he built a log bridge and cleared all the undergrowth along the fern strewn banks of the creek.

He was remarkable for the use of the Gothic motif in a series of tall rustic gates of interwoven pine boughs and resembling the famous Italian beaten ironwork of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. "Fillongley", was printed in rustic lettering and placed on the archway entering the driveway which wandered through some of the best virgin timber on the island. George put name plaques on some of these massive Douglas firs such as "Darby and Joan", "Beauty", "The Twins", and "Daddy".

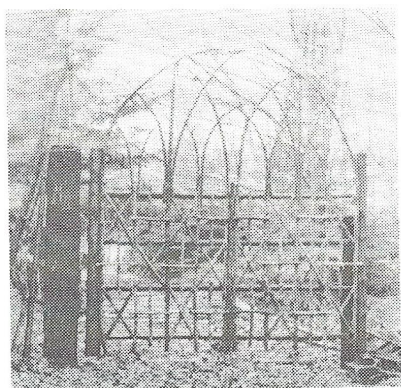
George and Amy were largely instrumental in having St. Saviour's Anglican Church built and were devoted workers and contributors. Reverend J.S.A. Bastin, Amy's brother and family from Sidney and the Smith families from Comox were frequent visitors. These young people were greatly pleased when George built a tennis court.

During one winter he built a 27-foot gas boat which he named "Neptune", and also a sturdy breakwater. But the latter did not provide

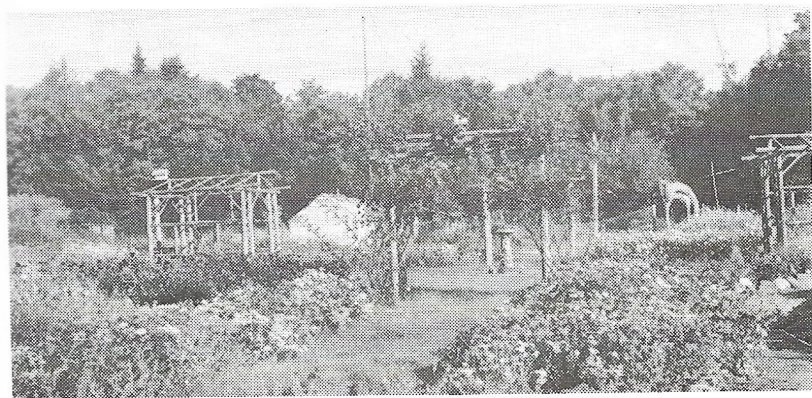




Entrance to Fillongley Park.



Inner gates in driveway, 1949.



Fillongley gardens.





Cee Lacon, Irvine Piercy, Jack Isbister and George Beadnell.



Bowling green, clubroom and glass-house.

sufficient shelter for the boat during the winter storms on his unprotected beach. He sold her to his cousin Harry Beadnell who was the fishery inspector of the district at that time.

Amy Beadnell passed away about 1932. Dr. Beadnell passed away the night of the disastrous forest fire which swept through the Merville district, July 6, 1922.

George devoted more and more time to beautifying the grounds of his estate. He made rustic furniture and trellises, a sundial, bird houses and a lovely bridge to span the lily pond. He built a greenhouse and grew all his own plants for his many flower beds and rockeries. He was an expert water diviner and he had a neighbour, Tom Isbister, dig three wells and had the water piped 1,000 feet so he would have sufficient for his lily ponds and gardens.

His next project was a bowling green which required much gravel and leaf mould, hauled and leveled by his neighbour with his team of horses. A clubhouse was then built from poles for the members of the Denman Island lawn bowling club, which he organized. Visiting teams from Courtenay often came to play.

Always interested in beauty he collected a large number of beautifully marked beach stones and he had Harold Hastings build a large fireplace in his livingroom. The stones were placed in cement and he had it raised to face the fire bricks, thus making a very unusual setting.

Over the fireplace he placed the printed Latin inscription, "*Hunc coeant flammae rustus fulgore sodales*," which translated, means "Hither let my friends foregather in my ruddy firelight glow." Smaller, similar fireplaces were built in the two bedrooms. He also helped Jim Dalziel to build his similar fireplace with the motto "art is lasting — life is short." He helped John Corrigan place the stones for his fireplace also.

A lover of good music, he enjoyed his evenings with his gramophone and radios, sitting by the fireside with his dog "Spot" and cat "Duchess." Dr. Beadnell brought the first piano to the island.

During his life time on Denman he had collected a large number of Indian relics which he was proud to display. He had an artistic collection of driftwood. Although he had always enjoyed good health, the upkeep of his grounds and the mile walk out to the road for his groceries and mail was getting to be a chore. He decided to donate his estate to the Provincial Government as a public park to the islanders and visitors. The British Columbia law prohibited the deed of any land being given as a gift, so he received the sum of one Canadian dollar bill from the Parks Board Recreation Division for the property. A friend, Bill Mee, framed the actual dollar bill and when George moved in 1957 to Glacier View Home, Comox, it was one of his most prized possessions.

While at the Home he had the misfortune to fall and injure his hip. He never fully recovered and he died at St. Joseph's Hospital, Comox, November 24, 1958, at the age of 89. His one request was that he would



be buried near his old home. The Denman Island Women's Institute petitioned the government to have a suitable plaque placed by his grave.

The public road to the park now enables hundreds of tourists to enjoy camping at the beautiful beach. The Upper Island Shrine Club held their annual picnic at this spot for some years. Alas, time has undone the many years of devoted work, as there is little trace of the lovely gardens, lily ponds, tennis court, greenhouse and the clubroom.

The bowling green is overgrown. The house was torn down and the gates and bridge are gone and the driveway impassable.

The government has done very little to improve this gift of rare quality left for posterity. Surely it deserves a better fate.

## The Baikie Family

William Baikie was 18 years of age when he left his home in Orkney, Scotland, in 1885, and came to Canada. He worked for the first three years on a fruit farm in Ontario but he always had it in mind to go west. When a young Methodist minister in his district intimated that he was going to carry the gospel to the British Columbia coast, William asked the minister to let him know what the prospects were for employment.

In due course, a letter was received from the Reverend Walter Baer to say he had established himself at Comox and was ministering to the Comox district which included Denman and Hornby islands. He said the employment prospects were good and there was a chance of work at Grant and Mounce sawmill operations at Union (now Cumberland).

Mr. Baer had mentioned to Alex McMillan that he was expecting a young man out from the east in the near future and Alex, who had numerous stock and had been burned out the previous year, said he needed help.

Along came Baikie by way of the Canadian Pacific Railway to New Westminster and the S.S. Robert Dunsmuir. At the Denman wharf he met his friend Baer, who had been preaching at Denman and the two travelled to Comox together. En route Baer mentioned the McMillan prospect and the young red-headed lad, anxious for work, returned to Denman the following day. He hired out for one year on the McMillan farm at wages of \$250 per year, plus board and washing just prior to Christmas in 1888.

In 1890, after working two years for McMillan, Baikie rented a place of his own, the McDonald, now the Lacon place. Having established himself, he sent for his father, also named William, and a sister Catherine to come from Orkney. In 1894 Catherine married George Leighton of Comox. Her brother bought part of the Charles McFarlan property on the

east side of the island in 1892. He then worked for William Robb at Comox.

He returned to his place on Denman and with the help of his father, who did a lot of clearing and burning, a fair amount of land was cultivated and buildings were erected. Keenly interested in fruit growing he set out a good-sized orchard. He married Elizabeth Selena Piercy in February 1898.

The young Baikie took an active part in community affairs and helped to build the Methodist church and the community hall. He was active in promoting the growth of Denman Island and took a leading part in its development. He was interested in the school and eventually served as a trustee.

In 1902, William was a director on the board of the Comox District Fall Fair. He used to take his exhibits of fruit up ahead of time by way of the steamer and for years seldom missed attending the Fair.

He took his wife and children Winnie and Wallace to the Apple Show held in the Horse Show building in Vancouver in November 1910. Massed displays of fruit from many parts of the Interior of British Columbia and the coast were shown. Several of his exhibits were awarded prizes. Fruit on Denman ripened three weeks earlier than the surrounding districts and had a high colour and excellent flavour.

During the first years of the century, Baikie logged with horses his property and adjoining stands. He was keenly interested in timber sales and real estate.

In November 1907 he made a trip back to the Orkneys to visit another sister, Ann Corrigan and being so pleased with the land of his adoption, he brought back quite a number of prospective settlers, including his niece, Annie Corrigan and five young men, Jack Robertson, Bill Isbister, Tommy Scott, John Baikie and Bill Wood who is 87 and the only one alive in 1975. In December 1908, the rest of the Corrigan family arrived. William helped them all get established.

After selling his farm in 1911 to H.R. Lacon, the Baikie family remained on until November 1913 when they moved to a rented place belonging to C. Adey on the west side of the island. In June 1916 they moved to their new home at the northern end on property purchased from T. Nelson. William continued with his fruit growing hobby and set out a young orchard and with a flock of sheep, a horse, and several family cows and poultry he farmed in a small way.

In 1917 he was appointed Fire Ranger for the Comox district and was stationed at Courtenay for the summer months. He took a keen interest in all forestry matters. He was active in political matters in the constituency and was always a staunch Liberal. He worked to get the rural telephone system in operation and to get daily mail. He was road foreman for a time.

When his sons Wallace, Harper and Jack took over the ferry service



in 1935, he worked as a deck hand. When they had a new boat built for the run, they named it the "Billy B", in his honour. Always friendly and jovial he never ceased to praise the island to visitors and tourists.

In 1937 Baikie and his son Jack enjoyed a three-month holiday trip to New Zealand where they visited his cousin John Baikie's family. He was a keen observer and when he returned home he wrote articles and gave lectures giving a very lucid picture of conditions, particularly in relation to farming.

He was collecting data for a history of the island at the time of his sudden death on May 29, 1941. He was 77 years old and was buried on Denman with full Masonic honors having been a member of the order for 28 years.

The three Baikie boys Wallace, Harper and Jack started working at an early age and were soon experienced men of the woods. In the early 1930s they were, like many other loggers in those days, out of work. Wallace and Harper were married and had families to support. Jack was single but all had difficulty in making ends meet. They had worked for the Comox Logging and other companies.

Enterprising men that they were, they decided to do something about the situation and in 1934 they went into partnership as the Baikie Brothers Logging Company.

Nothing daunted them; they knew there was a tough row to hoe and they learned the hard way. At the start they did all of their own work from bookkeeping to high-rigging, roadmaking and trucking. Pioneers in their own right, practically born to the woods, they toughed out the depression.

They started cleaning up a single bolt show at the old Bloedel claim at Union Bay and then logged the fir in the same area. This was their first logging contract. They logged on Denman and Hornby islands until 1938 on their own, then contracted for Comox Logging Company at Comox Lake.

The Baikie logging equipment up until this point, consisted of an old put-together gas donkey, an old Day Elder truck and a gas-consuming Kenworth truck. The whole outfit had not cost \$4,000.

They started to expand during 1939, 1940 and 1941, and were logging about 20 million board feet a year for the Comox Logging at Comox and Wolf Lakes. They also logged at Brown's Bay, for Timberland Company at Union Bay and Upper Campbell Lake, for MacMillan, Bloedel at Iron River and later at Quadra Island.

The Baikie brothers saw many changes in logging through the years. At the peak of operations they employed in the neighborhood of 275 men. Each brother had his operation to manage and after 34 years they decided to dissolve partnership and each branch out on his own with members of his family.

These men have done very well for themselves and have had a very

active community life. Wallace was president of the Courtenay Rotary Club in 1953 and is a member of the Campbell River Rotary Club. He was president of the British Columbia Truck Loggers in 1962 and 1963, and Commissioner for two years on the Comox Council, a Kinsman and a Chamber of Commerce member and served ten years on the Council at Campbell River. He was candidate for the Provincial Liberal Party in 1960.

Harper was made Illustrious Potentate Gizeh Temple A.A.O.N.M.S. in 1958 and was Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia in 1974.

Jack was past president of Rotary Club and District Governor in 1965. He was president of the British Columbia Truck Loggers for 1952 and 1953. He was Commissioner at Campbell River for nine years, eight as Chairman from 1947 to 1956. He was candidate for the Provincial Liberal Party in 1953. He died September 19, 1972.

All three brothers held chairs in Masonic lodges and were Past District Deputy Grand Masters. All three belonged to the Upper Island Shrine Club.

Wallace, Harper and Jack had practised log-rolling (birling) at their Denman beach home from the time they could swim. After they grew up and were married and living in the Comox district, they made log-rolling important in the North West.

In 1925 they entered the log-rolling event at the annual Loggers' Sports Day at Courtenay where Wallace won the first family championship. In 1929, Harper won the British Columbia Championship at New Westminster.

They won many trophies over the years and in 1929, Wallace and Harper travelled to Puyallup, Washington, to compete in the Northwest Championship, but were eliminated in the finals.

However, Fox News recorded the event for the movies, and through the movie houses of the United States and Canada they were further introduced to the public, nimbly displaying their art at their chosen sport.

In 1944, they returned to open competition, at the request of Paramount News who were making a travelogue entitled "Outdoor Sports in Canada". They put on a two-hour exhibition at their Brown's Bay camp and the "Birling Baikies" were at it again, to the pleasure of millions who had the privilege of seeing this movie released all over the world.

Harper's son Bill won the British Columbia open championship at North Vancouver in 1950. Harper won the Western Championship at Port Alberni and Bill won the Vancouver Island championship at Sooke. Wallace, Harper, Jack and Bill all competed on Paul Bunyan Day at Port Alberni and Bill won the Dietrich-Collins Equipment annual challenge trophy for log birling.



Two young girls Myrtle Edna Baikie and Dorothy Nunns competed at Campbell River, demonstrating the art of skipping while log birling.

While William was so active in many ways, it was his wife, Lena, who kept the home fires burning. She was a wonderful homemaker and was most hospitable. She was keenly interested in community affairs, especially the school, acting as a trustee for a time. She was a charter member of the Denman Island Women's Institute and the Ladies Aid, and was a great church worker.

While in her early teens she was nurse maid to Captain and Mrs. William Troup's children in Victoria. She helped her father, Tom Piercy, tend the Yellow Rock lighthouse and she spent a winter with relatives in New Brunswick, prior to her marriage.

She attended the British Columbia Pioneer Reunion held at Vancouver, May 7 - 9, 1925, when residents who had lived in the province for 50 years were honoured.

Lena was very interested in history and kept many items of interest and pictures which have proved a great help in writing this history. Her four daughters, Winnie Isbister, Eunice Dalziel, Rose McKenzie and Jean Feely all married farmers who had also worked in the woods.

Lena passed away January 8, 1933, after a lengthy illness.

The Piercy Family Tree book was written by Winnie. Other activities include: The Women's Institute, Historical Society, Piercy Reunions, Eastern Star, United Church Women.

Eunice was a charter member of the Denman Island Lace Club. She passed away in 1939.

Rose taught school for many years. She is a Past Matron in Florence Chapter No. 53 Order of the Eastern Star, and Past Grand Guardian of the International Order of Jobs Daughters of British Columbia. Took active part in Piercy Reunions as secretary.

Jean collected data for the Royston History. Is active in the Lace Club and community life, Eastern Star, and enjoys handicrafts and oil painting.

# Man Overboard

Thursday December 2, 1926

When genial Bill Baikie took hold of the line  
To help Sandy Swan swing into the brine  
He little did reckon on the wiles of a plank  
That swept him out into the waters so dank.

When Sandy cast off he holds by the stern  
Then swings with the current, a trick all should learn,  
And Bill who was standing quite handy near  
Was called to assist with the casting of gear.

He jumped on the stern of the staunch little boat  
Without so much waiting to take off his coat  
Took hold of the stern line for well he knew how  
While Sandy let loose of the line at the prow.

The boat swung around like a well behaved craft  
With William as anchor to hold her back aft,  
But he had not observed that some careless rotter  
Had left a plank sticking out over the water

And as the boat swung in the current so strong  
Our hero soon found out that something was wrong  
For the stern of the boat the timber passed under  
And Bill and the boat soon parted asunder.

Friend William had grown at late years rather stout  
And he made a most terrible splash without doubt,  
And he took to the waters so swift and so chilly  
And his friends thought the end had come for poor Billie.

But soon like a cork he came to the surface  
And his nautical knowledge he used to good purpose  
He coolly struck out for some near-by piling  
Made his objective and clung there smiling.

Willing hands soon rescued our friend from his plight  
And found him dry clothing that fitted just right  
But William avers the next time he goes under  
He'll make sure that the water is warmer, by thunder!

Written by W.A.W. Hames  
Courtenay, B.C.



## Walter Gordon

One of Denman's most colourful characters in early days was Walter Gordon. His herd of cattle ran wild on the island and when he rounded them up he filled his pockets with raisins, and perhaps some fruit or cheese and prepared to spend several days in the forest. He played them out by continually keeping them on the move until they had tamed down enough to handle. He was a very strong man being big and tall with a loud voice and a hearty laugh. He loved to sing.

When he visited neighbours he enchanted the youngsters by playing his flute and singing "Old Uncle Ned" and other folk songs. He would reach in his pockets and hand out raisins to the little ones.

He was lightkeeper at Yellow Rock for a time and as he had to row across to the end of Denman for fresh water and wood, he decided to manufacture an easier method. He rigged up an aerial basket suspended from a tight rope reaching across the quarter mile of sea. His first run was successful but the second attempt failed because of the added weight of tools. The line broke and he landed in the water. Luckily a neighbour, Fred Scott, was fishing near by and came to the rescue.

This ingenious man used to ship pigs on the hoof and as they were rather hard to handle he built crates to fit each body so that its feet stuck out the bottom slats. It was amusing to see the crates walking aboard the steamer. The crates were returned for the next shipment.

He bought a small farm on Hornby Island and lived there the rest of his life. One lovely summer day Mrs. William Baikie and family and her sister, Mrs. Tom Chalmers and family decided to have a picnic and visit Miss L. Bennett on Hornby. Old Grandpa Baikie and Ray Chalmers rowed the boats and everything was lovely until they started for home. As they approached the beach at Phipps Point road they saw Gordon leading a big bull so the ladies and young ones scrambled up on the top of the boat shed. Gordon intended to tie the bull to a large rock until he was floated with the high tide and then he planned to swim him to Denman. The bull did not like all the commotion and Ray and Grandpa rowed out to help Gordon who was having trouble controlling the bull who was bellowing and charging around in the water.

This upset the visitors so finally Gordon cut the rope and the bull made a mad dash up the hill for home. The picnic party was then able to get in their boats and row back to Denman.

Gordon bought a big mare from Tom Chalmers. He tried to get her to swim from Whalebone Point across Lambert Channel to Shingle Spit on Hornby. Poor Belle had the heaves and was only able to swim a short distance when she sank.

Gordon made trips to Vancouver Island occasionally and he was known to pack a few spikes in his pocket in case he was unable to borrow a rowboat. He would find a board or plank and spike two small logs

together to make a raft. He was a strong swimmer and once he paddled across Baynes Sound on a log.

He batched all his life and one of his favourite meals consisted of lots of bread and butter eaten with slices of sugar-coated raw apple and pints of strong tea. This combination of food caused a stomach ailment which bothered him in late years. He had the misfortune to hurt his leg and he hobbled around for a time until neighbours took him to St. Joseph's Hospital, Comox. He contracted pneumonia and passed away at the age of 85. He was buried beside his mother in the Denman cemetery.

## The Nixon Family

In 1892, the Rev. Harper Nixon, his wife and three young sons, Harper, Jim and Louie arrived from Ireland and bought the place owned by William Dingwall on the north-west side of Denman. Mr. Nixon was an Anglican minister who had retired and was looking for a suitable place to live. He was a keen yachtsman and spent a great deal of his time on his boats. He travelled to Victoria in November 1892 to have his new steam launch "Nautilus" admeasured and registered.

He had a large bungalow-type house built, which was probably the first house on Denman to have a fireplace, bay windows and high plastered walls and ceilings. Three young sons, Frank, Tom and Jack were born after they came to Denman and Mrs. Nixon's sister Miss L. Louie arrived from France to reside with them for a time.

More land was cleared and they farmed in a small way until after World War I. Officers from the naval ships stationed at Comox were often entertained by the Nixons in early days. Mr. Nixon took them on hunting and fishing trips. He had a sail boat named "Chinook". Later he had a gas boat named "Salal".

Mrs. Nixon was a pleasant community minded person and she gave the organ for the Methodist church which opened in 1889. She also raised money with socials to help build the old hall. The boys had over four and a half miles to walk to school and their mother often took them by a horse and buggy on wet days.

Mr. Nixon owned "Twin Islands" up the coast past Powell River and around 1917 he met with an accident while there and was rushed to Powell River hospital but died shortly afterwards. Jim, Fran, Frank, Tom and Louie served in World War I. Jim joined the Navy at Esquimalt and trained on HMCS Rainbow and later served on a Canadian Drifter. Tom was a veteran of both World Wars and he sent plans for a new type shell to the NRC in 1940. He had a very ingenious mind and invented and patented a number of articles. He was interested and involved in Oak Island off the Nova Scotia coast where digging and drilling took place

and revealed bits of oak wood and bits of copper and brass believed to be sunken Spanish treasure. This is one of the mysteries of the times and so far nothing definite has been accomplished. Tom wrote the words to several war songs.

## H. M. M. Beadnell

Captain H.H.M. (Harry) Beadnell was born at Hastings, England, but lived most of his boyhood in Wales. He studied agriculture at University and at the age of 19 years he migrated to Australia where he worked on farms and he also worked in Tasmania and in New Zealand. He sailed for San Francisco and was employed at the Newhall farm near Los Angeles prior to coming to Denman in 1891 to visit his uncle Dr. G. Beadnell. He liked the island and he bought the McCutcheon property which adjoined his uncle's estate.

He was friendly and jovial and he spent eight or nine years on Denman, making almost yearly trips back to Wales. In all he crossed the Atlantic 12 times making several trips on the steam-engined sail boat Lake Ontario.

He was interested in going to the Klondike gold rush but his mother, Matilda Jane Beadnell arrived from Wales to discourage him from going. His sister Mattie also visited him while he was on Denman.

Around 1899 he returned home and joined the British Army, where he served as an officer in the Royal Welsh Fusileers. He married Miss Winnifred Thwaites in 1901 and they returned to British Columbia, via Australia. After spending a short time on Denman they moved to Lake Cowichan where Harry was road foreman for a time.

He sold his Denman farm in 1905 and moved to Comox where he opened a real estate office with F.R. Biscoe and later with his brother-in-law, Dundas Thwaites. Mr. Thwaites came to Denman in 1903 to visit his sister, Mrs. H. Beadnell and he worked with William Baikie at logging.

Harry was appointed Fishery Inspector of the Comox District in 1914 and held this post for 21 years, until he was superannuated at the age of 65 in 1935. He did a great deal for conservation of the fisheries in this area and being an ardent fisherman, his position was not only his job but his hobby.

Mrs. Beadnell made trips periodically back to England where several of her family of four daughters and two sons, were born. She passed away in April 1975 at the age of 96 in England where she spent her later years. Harry passed away at the age of 76 in 1946. His son Jack of Comox, worked many years for the Fisheries Department also.





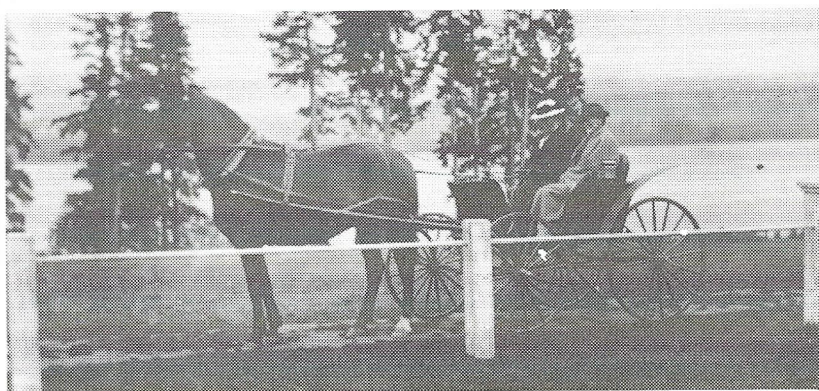
Dr. George Beadnell.  
Mrs. George Beadnell jr.



Mrs. Marie Nixon.  
1893.



Mr. and Mrs. Jack Piket.



Mr. and Mrs. James Ormiston.





The Nixon boys, April 1900. Harper, Jim and Louie, Tom in chair, Frank on stool.



*Back row:* Joe, Alex, Mrs. Dumaresq, Sam Dumaresq, and Sammie. *Front row:* Stan, Bertie and Anna. 1912.



# The Ormiston Family

(Elk Haven)

Interesting history is linked with one of the first places pre-empted on Denman Island. In 1875, J. Madigan located on a large tract of land on the west side of the island, which he later subdivided, selling to Alex McMillan, John Piercy and Tom Piercy who had arrived on the island in 1876.

In 1891, there arrived from Scotland a Mr. and Mrs. James Ormiston. They were travelling around the world in search of a suitable place to live because of his health. While visiting Mr. and Mrs. W. Robb at Comox, they came over to Denman and boarded for a time with Mr. and Mrs. A. McMillan.

As the climate and surroundings seemed ideal from a health point of view, they purchased the John Piercy holding of 80 acres, with its half mile of beach frontage. Situated one mile and a half from the wharf, this property overlooked Baynes Sound and had a magnificent view of Mount Arrowsmith, the Glacier and the Beaufort Range on Vancouver Island.

Mr. and Mrs. Ormiston returned to Scotland while their large colonial-type bungalow home was being built by Malcolm McCrae, a contractor from Nanaimo. Much of the materials and furnishings came around Cape Horn by windjammer, even to the metal roof for the barn. There still remains in the house some of the furniture they brought from Scotland. The dining room suite of exquisite hand-carved old country hardwood and the massive bedroom suite are invaluable.

The grounds were landscaped with tropical shrubs and rare plants by a Chinese named Mann and a number of his countrymen. In time a model farm was established and a cottage was built for the farm manager. David Spencer of Vancouver spent some years here with his wife and three young daughters.

The winding driveway through the woods remains today in its original state. Several virgin fir trees still stand and some of the ornamental trees.

Mr. Ormiston's health improved and, although they lived a very retired life, they maintained a keen interest in the progress of the island, especially the school. Mrs. Ormiston was an active member of the Ladies Aid and the Presbyterian (United) church, leaving a legacy for its upkeep.

Mr. Ormiston retained an interest in the families' coal mining company in Scotland, returning to visit his brother during 1910-1912, travelling via the Orient. While in Japan they purchased a number of wooden pens and had them engraved with the names of the pupils in the Denman school. Mrs. Ormiston visited the school and spoke on the trip around the world and presented the pens.

While in Scotland, Mrs. Ormiston contacted a young woman, Mary



Scott, who had been a maid in her Scottish home, and who later married and was mother of six children. She had been recently widowed and arrangements were made to move the family to the cottage on the Denman farm. Leila, named after Mrs. Ormiston, George, Allen and wee Bob Scott attended the Denman school for several years. Ella and Tom had found work in Vancouver, so eventually Mrs. Scott and the rest of the family moved there.

A young Chinese houseboy at the Ormiston's attended the Denman school for a time in order to learn English.

The Ormiston's had a number of Indian totem poles among the parklike area near the shore. One stood each side of the gate at the beach and two tall poles were placed in front of the house, and a large thunderbird with wide spread wings sat on top of a pole in the yard. They also had a lovely set of elk horns mounted and set up on their front veranda. Wallace Baikie found the horns which he later sold to the Ormistons.

In the late twenties Mr. and Mrs. Jack Boulton came to manage the farm. Mr. and Mrs. Ormiston in their later years spent the winter months at the Empress hotel in Victoria. He died at the age of 92 in 1938 and Mrs. Ormiston continued to live part of the time at her Denman home with her companion, Mrs. Wallace, until she passed away in 1944 at the age of 93.

In May 1955, Dr. C.J. Roach and Mrs. Roach of Vancouver bought part of the estate which they named "Bonnie Brae" and, while they remodelled for modern comfort, they still maintained the charm and beauty of this old-world home. Mrs. Roach passed on suddenly in January 1959 and six months later Dr. Roach sold the 35-acre tract to the BPOE of British Columbia.

They named this home "Elk Haven" and did a great deal of remodelling. A new roof and chimneys and a recreation room in the basement have been completed.

Each summer hundreds of members of the Elks and their families come from Vancouver Island and many parts of British Columbia to take part in the Elk's Day picnic weekend which is usually held the first Saturday in July. Many bring their camping equipment and spend their holidays. This beautiful spot is ideal for a home for elderly members but as yet many of the proposed plans have not been accomplished.

Many Girl Guide groups and under-privileged groups of children from parts of Vancouver Island have enjoyed camping here.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Barber came from Kimberley in 1961 to be caretakers at Elk Haven but Mrs. Barber was in poor health and passed away after a few years. Walter was very active in community affairs and a member of the Royal Canadian Legion and received his 50-year pin in 1974 at the local Branch 234.

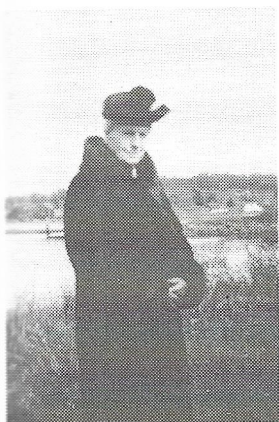
He had an outstanding army career beginning with service as a water boy in the South African War where he received the Victoria Star from



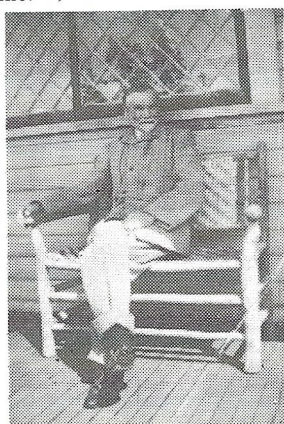
John Graham family taken around 1888. John Graham, Emma, Mrs. Graham, Minnie, Ida, Alby, an aunt, Isabell, Johnny.



Elkhaven, the former Ormiston home. 1908.

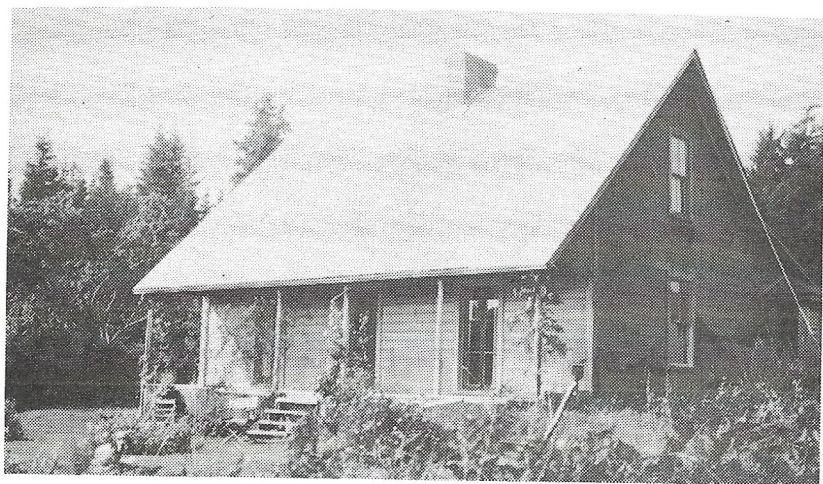


Mrs. James Ormiston



Mr. James Ormiston





George Beadnell's home.  
1910.



Mrs. H. H. Beadnell.  
1901.



Captain H.H. Beadnell.  
1901.

the Queen. He was one of the eight men decorated with the Monns Medallion 1916, received the Marine Medal 1914-1915, a Victory Medal for bravery in the line of duty; also the Merit Medal as Sergeant Major for bravery in the field.

He worked in construction and mining business in many parts of the province. He was made a Life Member of the BPO Elks.

In August 1975 he moved to Nanaimo and Mr. and Mrs. J. Torry became caretakers of Elk Haven.

## Chrome or Yellow Rock

By Margery Corrigan

The rough and rugged coastline of British Columbia accounts for the numerous lighthouses and lightstations in this part of the world.

From the time of Captain Vancouver and later, Captain T. Richards, explorers have tried to map the coastline and to mark the dangerous rocks and shoals. One of the oldest lighthouses is the one on Yellow or Chrome Rock. This rock is at the eastern extremity of Denman Island in Baynes Sound and was the scene of many a wreck in the days gone by.

The name Yellow Rock probably came from the fact that, in the early spring, the two-acre island is covered with a mass of yellow flowers. Below the lighthouse itself can be found a number of interesting petroglyphs. Also whale bones and Indian relics have been found.

The contract for the first lighthouse on that rock was awarded to A. Brittancourt of Nanaimo in February 1890 and the light was placed in operation in January, 1891. The first light was small, 35 millimetres, and had a mantle like a very large gas lantern. It was lit by igniting a cup of methylated spirits which burned with a blue flame and heated the generator. The oil was then turned on and came through a tiny hole, burning brightly in the centre of a round case of polished chrome reflectors. The case floated in a basin of mercury and was made to revolve by a system of weights. These weights were suspended from a cable which reached to the bottom of the tower. At sundown the keeper set the light, wound the cable to the top. When all was set the weights slowly dropped down to the bottom, taking four hours altogether. In the longer nights of darkness the keeper would have to rewind the weights.

A foghorn was also installed and was run by compressed air built up to 40 lbs. pressure in a large tank which sat just beneath it. Blast intervals were: blast 2 and one-half seconds, silence 4 seconds, blast 2 and one-half seconds, silence 4 seconds, blast 2 and one-half seconds, silence 97 seconds, repeating. An emergency hand-blast horn was also installed in case of motor failure.



The lighthouse itself has been much improved through the years. The first one was a small square building of wood which included the keeper's quarters below the light. A winding staircase led to the light which could be seen for about twelve miles. Separate buildings were installed through the years with a nice home for the keeper and his family.

The lighthousekeepers in the earlier years were:

January 1, 1891 - T.H. Piercy

October 10, 1898 - William McDonagh

July 1, 1901 - Walter Gordon

February 6, 1906 - John Doney

December 24, 1914 - James F. Street

November 6, 1917 - Albert Doney (son of J. Doney)

March 14, 1919 - Captain D. O'Brien

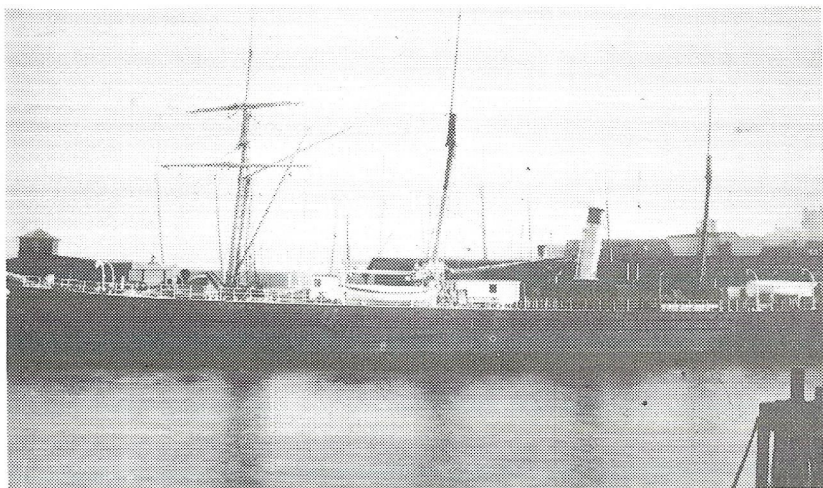
August 29, 1922 - A. Couldrey.

In later years a number of families from various areas have served as lightkeepers. During this time there were a few substitute keepers not officially listed. One of these was Jim Strachan of Hornby Island. His daughter, Jessie (later Mrs. B. French) was born on Yellow Rock. Another baby, Olive was also born on the Rock when her father J. Street was keeper there. Mr. and Mrs. W.E. Gardner were lightkeepers from 1964 until 1975. He has had several assistants during this time.

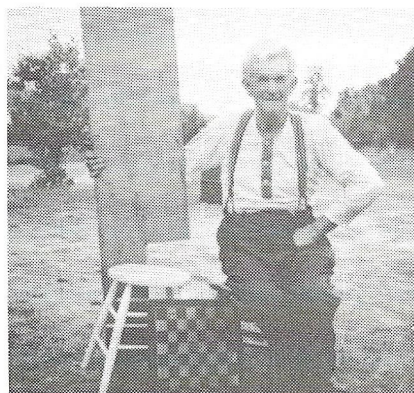
With the installation of a light on the Rock fewer ships were wrecked there. However, a ship was wrecked there December 20, 1900 with the loss of nine lives. The S.S. Alpha, built on the Clyde in 1863 for the Cunard Steamship Line was on her way to the Orient where she had been sold for scrap after 36 years of service on the east and west coasts of North America. She carried a load of 500 tons of dog salmon, provisions for the voyage, and an ample supply of "Geneva Rum" to be consumed en route. She was to call at Union Bay for coal sufficient for the trip to Yokohama. Having been delayed for a time by burned-out bearings it was dark when the storm struck and Captain Yorke decided to head for Yellow Rock lighthouse in order to get his bearings.

Twice the Japanese lookout called out, "Light Ahead" but it was too late and the ship struck the rock, bouncing off and striking it a second time. Quartermaster Anderson immediately scrambled off the ship with a life line and, miraculously made shore where he managed to tie it around a pinnacle of rock. With the help of two more sailors, who managed to reach the rock, heavier lines were secured. In the next two and a half hours 26 more men made their way through the terrible seas to safety. Captain Yorke, the two Barber brothers and six other seamen were lost when, afraid to try the terrible crossing they went down with the ship.

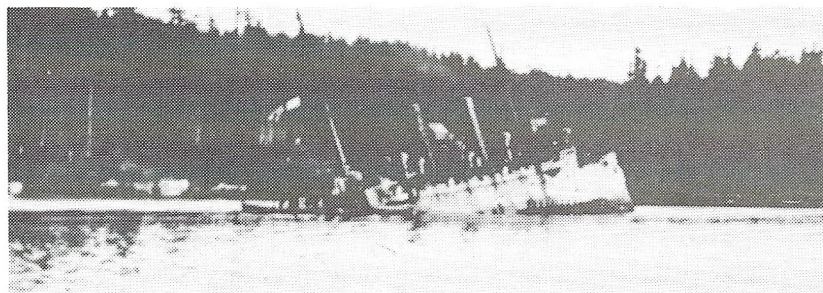
In the meantime the lighthousekeeper, William McDonagh did all he could to help the shivering sailors. He built a fire for light and warmth and shared his scant provisions among them. When the storm subsided



The S.S. "Alpha" which was wrecked on Chrome Island on December 20, 1900.

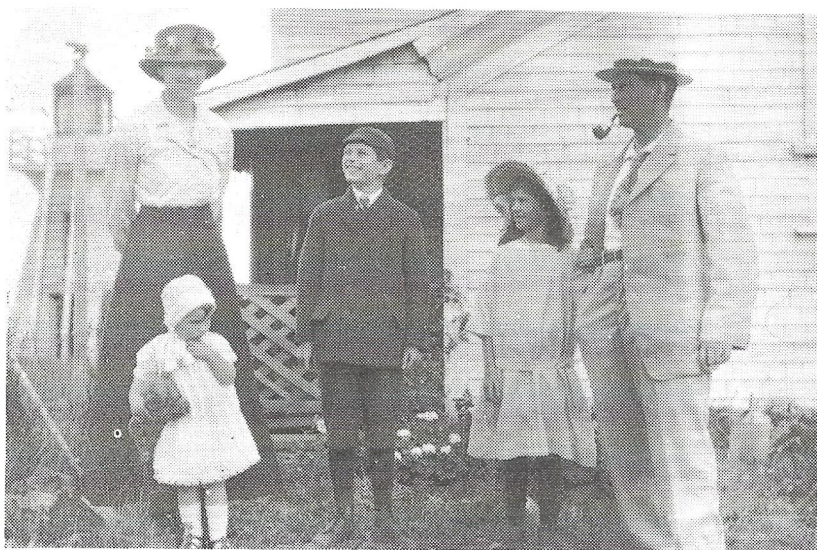


Irvine Piercy with wreckage he salvaged from the "Alpha", two stools, a hatch cover, which he made into a checker board, some plush cushions, an 18 ft. ladder and a hardwood panel.

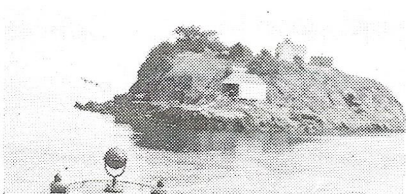


H.M.S. Flora stranded on Village Point reef, 1903.





Jim Street, lighthouse keeper at Chrome Island 1915-1918 with Mrs. Street, Frank, Phyllis and Olive.



Yellow Rock Lighthouse prior to World War I.



Yellow Rock Lighthouse in 1974.



Jack Doney, lighthouse keeper before World War I.

the survivors sailed to Union Bay in a boat loaned to them by the Ford brothers of Hornby Island.

The shores of the Island were covered with wreckage. Many cases of the dog salmon were salvaged by the local residents and buried as fertilizer in their gardens. At least one case of Geneva Rum came ashore. It was found by an Indian who was later found dead near the Rock having literally drunk himself to death. Three bodies came ashore a few days later at Lacon's beach and were picked up by Theodore Nelson. He attempted to tow them round to Denman wharf in a small boat but it cap-sized just as he was nearing the wharf. They were recovered by two boys, James Swan and John McMillan. James' father was the local coffinmaker and, on instructions from Vancouver he made coffins. The bodies of the purser, Sam Barber and that of the third engineer, Murray were duly shipped to Vancouver. The other body, that of a stowaway named McKay, was presumably unclaimed and was buried in the Methodist churchyard (behind the present United Church). A large fir tree marks the spot.

Through the years a few divers have been down to see what they could find. In 1959 the ship was stripped bare by a salvage barge and hundreds of tons of metal went to the scrapdealers. In May, 1960 two divers, Cal Smith and Ken Draper brought up portholes encrusted with sea life. One of these is decorating the breezeway at the home of Mr. and Mrs. F.C. Morrison of Royston.

More recently divers Victor Anysymin, Doug McLean and Edwin Jones managed to raise the one and a half ton anchor from its 72-year-old bed at the base of the Rock. With the aid of a tug manned by Robert Kirk and Don Watson, the anchor was taken to Denman wharf, and in 1974 was mounted on a cement block near the ferry slip to be seen by all. The Denman Island Ratepayers had a plaque made in memory of those who lost their lives in that disaster, placed beside the anchor.

British Columbia Hydro installed power on Yellow Rock in 1971.

Lighthousekeeping in early days had its rugged times. When Tom H. Piercy, first keeper was on the Rock he used to have members of his family with him at times. One day, when his eight-year-old son Harvey was with him he got into trouble. Finding a blasting cap left by builders the lad was pounding it with a rock when it exploded, blowing off the top of his thumb and injuring two other fingers. His father, unable to leave the light unattended, rowed the boy over to Denman Island, instructing him to walk the trail to the home of Dr. Beadnell, a matter of six miles. This the boy did and was taken to Cumberland Hospital by the Doctor. That, in the horse and buggy days was quite a journey in itself.

Around 1907, a lighthouse was built on the reef situated a short distance north of the Denman wharf. A wooden trestle some 200 feet long spanned the distance between the shore and the lighthouse. Johnny McMillan was the first lightkeeper and during the winter he often slept at



the lighthouse. Harve Piercy and members of his family tended the light from around 1912 until 1925. An automatically controlled light was placed on the reef and is serviced periodically by the lighthouse tender. In time the trestle walk and the lighthouse were dismantled and only the cement base remains.

A red spar buoy marks the reef extending for four cables off Village Point. A lighted buoy and a red spar buoy are placed at Repulse Point south of Metcalfe Bay.

## H.M.S. Flora

On December 1903, the two-year old HMS Flora, a 4,400-ton second class cruiser, with a complement of 312 men cleared the coaling dock at Union Bay, bound for Esquimalt, with Captain J.J. Baker commanding. She was steaming southward through heavy fog when her navigating officer apparently mistook the red spar buoy which marks the reef extending for four cables off Village Point for the three-pile beacon with white painted discs marking the sand spit off Base Flat, some four miles to the south on the opposite shore.

The Flora crashed into Village Point at half-speed, or about 10 knots. With a scream of buckling plates the man-o-war drove high upon the reef. Within seconds, her scuppers being unaccountably open and her stern sagging, the Flora's after section was submerged. Off-duty officers fled their bunks for their lives in rapidly rising waters.

Soon the after part of the cruiser had 10 feet of water above deck, the top of her jackstaff being just visible. The quarters of the commander and his officers were in the after part of the vessel. With what little of their effects they could gather together in a hurry, the crew scrambled forward up the sloping deck, for by this time that part which remained above water was lying at a sharp angle from the bow, fast on the jagged rocks.

The wardroom, with its racks of arms was also quickly submerged, and the entire ship's complement, unable to stop the rush of water through the open scuttles, were forced to the bow, whence they scrambled down onto the rocks. Miraculously, not a single man was lost or injured thanks largely to the quick thinking and courage of an unnamed lieutenant engineer who was off duty at the time of the stranding and in his bunk when the crash brought thousands of gallons of water surging into the ship. The heroic engineer raced to the engine room almost naked and scrambled through the tilted passage ways to the crank which operated the watertight bulkheads separating the engine room from the rest of the ship. Deftly closing the bulkheads he saved the engine room

and its machinery from flooding. His cool brave work undoubtedly saved those stokers on duty from drowning.

They were afraid that at any moment the water would rush in upon them, for, in the dark they did not know what had happened. Encouraged by the calm voice of the officer they were able to clamber up from the fire-room without panic.

Three years earlier, the collier Willamette had crashed ashore at almost the very same spot. The large boulder-like rocks which formed the reef off Village Point had broken the Willamette's back.

The other factors which weighed heavily against the cruiser's escaping her predicament were the tide, which rose 12 feet in five hours, and her weight for the Flora had just bunkered 600 tons of coal at Union Bay. However, immediately upon striking, her crew had set to work removing some 400 tons of fuel and stores to lighten her. She was stripped of ammunition -- even her guns -- to improve her chances of refloating. Divers were successful in closing the scuppers and reported the ship's bottom had been punctured but damage was less than anticipated having been confined to the Flora's false keel. However, she remained hard aground, held tight in her vice.

Rear-Admiral A.K. Bickford, commanding officer of the Esquimalt squadron, chartered a special Esquimalt and Nanaimo train and headed for Nanaimo, where he boarded the steamer Joan to proceed to the scene of the wreck accompanied by H.F. Bullen of the Esquimalt Marine Railway and British Columbia Company. Admiral Bickford had ordered his flagship HMS Grafton, then in drydock, and HMS Egeria, to proceed to Denman Island with salvage gear. The weather was dead calm but it was feared that if a southeast gale should spring up the cruiser would be gravely endangered so the HMS Grafton returned to Esquimalt for more salvage gear and powerful pumps.

The navy attempted without the help of tugs to refloat the cruiser from her perch on a shelf which sheered off to a depth of five or six fathoms. Divers had patched the holes and scows were chained about the ship's stern. Then the powerful steam tug Maude joined the operation, bringing the salvage fleet to 1,000 men, two ships, one tug, three barges, a storeship and numerous scows. Two steam launches also were to assist. The Flora's machinery was in full operation, including her electrical plant and every removable piece of gear had gone, reducing her to a mere shell.

Anchors had been placed in position and linked by cable to the Flora's steam winches to enable the cruiser to assist the salvage fleet.

Finally, it was over. HMS Flora refloated and was on her way, badly battered, to Victoria under her own power. After a week of painstaking work and frustration, a final 20-minute effort saw the Flora floated off as a thousand voices cheered, sirens blared and the band played "A Life on the Ocean Wave" and "Rule Britannia."

Once her stores had been reloaded at Union Bay and temporary



repairs completed Flora limped southward with HMS Grafton and a destroyer. After a spell in drydock HMS Flora -- unlike so many other ships which came to grief in British Columbia waters -- lived to sail again.

The rocky reef at Village Point in Baynes Sound is considered one of the most dangerous in coastal waters. In the twenties, the tug Storm King ran on the reef but was able to free herself at high tide.

## Methodist, Presbyterian, United Church

In 1878 a Presbyterian minister, the Rev. F. B. McElmon of Comox, came to Denman Island and preached the first sermon in Robert Swan's house which was situated below the mountain (at Grieders). An Anglican minister, the Rev. J. W. Willemar came from Comox by canoe occasionally, to preach. Less than a dozen families had settled here and for a time worship services were held only when visiting ministers were available.

The Rev. Walter Baer arrived from Ontario in 1888 to establish the work of the Methodist church at Jack Hart's Point, Union Bay, Denman Island and Union Mines, now Cumberland, though the membership for the whole circuit at this time was only four. Rev. Baer was stationed at the settlement of Comox.

During the month of December of the same year a revival meeting on Denman Island, resulted in a large increase in membership. Denman Island became the headquarters of Methodist work with a congregation duly organized and constituted on December 26, 1888. Rev. Baer remained only one year but during his ministry the church was built and officially opened by the Rev. Hall of Nanaimo, with 48 islanders present.

A group photograph taken at the time still hangs in the church. Families represented in the photograph include Piercy, Baikie, Graham, Keenan, McMillan, Piket, Pickles, Swan, McFarlan in addition to Rev. Baer and Rev. Hall and Miss E. Coghlan, school teacher and the Grieve family who were visitors.

The church is situated in a beautiful woodland area on the top of the hill near the main road crossing the island, and to this day remains very much in its original state. Bob Swan gave the property and hewed the main timbers and the church was constructed by community effort. The lumber was purchased from Grant's mill at Union and was probably rafted across Baynes Sound.

The pioneer families were scattered all along the shoreline of the island, and they had to walk miles to attend church and meet neighbours. The Denman Island Methodist church was one of the first built in the Comox Valley. The old bible, still in the church, bears the date June



Sunday School and adult group at the Methodist Church, 1889.  
T. Nelson, kneeling was teacher.

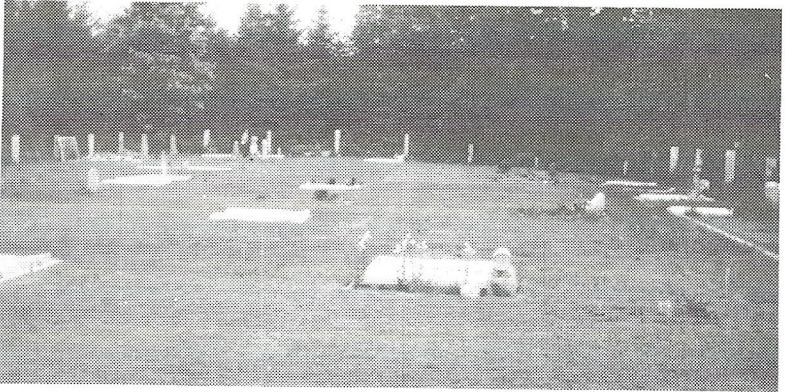


Opening of the Methodist Church, 1889. *Back row:* George McFarlan, Mrs. J. Graham, Jim Graham, Rev. Hall, Alby Graham, Charles McFarlan, Willie Keenan, G. Grieve, Tom Piercy and John Piket. *Second row:* Mrs. T. Piercy, son Irvine, John Graham, Mrs. Keenan and Laura, Belle Graham, William Baikie, Lena Piercy, Fred Piercy, Ed. Graham, Wes Piercy, I. Grieve, Johnny Graham, Flora Keenan, Gertie Piket, Maggie Piercy and Nellie Piket. *Seated:* Mrs. J. Piket and daughter Floss, Maggie and Johnny McMillan, Mrs. A. Pickles, Jim Piercy, Ida Graham, Emma Graham, Charlie Keenan, Tom Piket, Harve Piercy, Nellie Piercy, Gladys Keenan, John McFarlan, Annie Keenan. *In front:* Rev. W. W. Baer and Miss E. Coglan (teacher) and Len Piket.





Presbyterian Church group taken in 1917.



Denman Island Cemetery



Miss Ruby Boake (Stewart) who taught school at Denman in 1914 with group of former pupils. Photo taken June 8, 1958. Occasion: 70th anniversary of the opening of the Methodist church. *Front row:* Rose McKenzie, Ruby Millard, Edith Rourke. *Second row:* Winnie Isbister, Alma Christie, Elsie Watson, Mrs. Stewart, Katie Ferry, Vetra Millard, Muriel Thornbery, Alex Chalmers, Jim Dalziel. *Back row:* Wallace Baikie, John Corrigan, Tom Nixon and Jim McFarlan.

1879. The original organ, believed to have been purchased by Mrs. H. Nixon, is also in good repair.

The first organist was Miss E. Coghlan who taught the island children for seven years. Through the years organists have included Miss Nellie Piercy who married Rev. F. Peacock during his ministry here at the turn of the century. Followed by Mrs. T. Chalmers, Miss W. Anderson, and Dave Wotherspoon in 1915. Grace Alder during her father's ministry and then Mrs. J. Mosely carried on for 15 years followed by Gwen Fulton (later Mrs. Mitchell) and from 1950 to 1973 by Mrs. T. Isbister.

Choir work was limited but Mrs. Campbell organized a choir which was later carried on by Mr. and Mrs. James McNaught. The Union Bay United Church junior and senior choirs have given special music and song for church festivals. The junior choir from Cumberland have made occasional visits. The congregation appreciated having these special guests, especially the lovely solos of Mrs. E. Sawchuck and the late George Harwood.

Ministers serving the church after Rev. Baer included the Reverends S. Forsythe, Stevens and Peter McKenzie. Before the turn of the century the church was being served by Methodist ministers and shortly afterwards became known as a Presbyterian church under the board of Home Missions. Probably due to the transportation facilities the Presbyterian ministers came from Comox and included Reverends J. Christie, A. Fraser and a third Scotsman, Alexander Tait in 1898.

Rev. Tait had a memorable experience on his way to Denman Island to solemnize the marriage of William Baikie and Selena Piercy on the evening of February 24, 1898. Accompanied by the groom's brother-in-law, George Leighton, he set out from Comox early in the day with his horse and buggy. A winter storm was raging and a large fallen tree blocked the narrow road and it took considerable time to cut out a log so the vehicle could pass through and it was late when they finally reached Union Bay.

There they borrowed a boat and set out in the darkness to row across the two mile stretch of water to the Piercy farm. Safely landed, they then walked some distance to the house, arriving about 11 p.m. to be welcomed by the wedding guests and a very anxious bridegroom. The bride had patiently kept to her room all evening. All's well that end's well -- and the wedding ceremony was happily concluded as well as the christening of the bride's niece, Lena Cessford.

The charge was now enlarged to include the pastoral care of Union Bay and Hornby Island and Rev. F. Peacock lived in a small house on the Piercy farm. During the first decade of the 1900's Rev. J. Ross stayed several years followed by Charles and William Kidd from Ontario who boarded at the Piercy home. William used to leave home early Sunday morning and ride his bicycle across Denman, row a mile and a half to Hornby, then cycle on to the school for a service. On the return trip he



had an afternoon service at Denman, and in the evening he rowed to Union Bay for a service, returning the same night to Denman.

A far cry from modern transportation.

The Rev. J. Alder served from 1915-1918 followed by Rev. J. Gibson and Rev. J. Rowlands in 1921-1922.

In 1925 the United Church of Canada was established and the general growth and progress on the island made it necessary to enlarge the church. An entrance hall replaced the small porch and a chancel was built.

The interior of the church was lined and varnished, new windows and more pews added, the exterior painted, a new woodshed built and a fence put up. A new circular heater replaced the very old box heater and a new chimney was built. Rev. J. Hobbins, who remained until 1930 was minister at this time, to be followed by M. S. Eby, Patterson and F. Chilton up to 1940. During this time new hymn books were purchased from money left to the church by the T. Nelson estate.

Around this period, at the beginning of World War II, a number of families moved from Denman, so the congregation became smaller. Between this time and 1948 ministers included the Reverends M. E. Leslie, A. Anderson and W. H. Welch. It was during Dr. P. Kelly's time, that Denman Island and Union Bay became a joint charge with Cumberland Pastoral charge, with the minister residing in Cumberland as the largest centre. It now became necessary for the service at Denman to be held in the afternoon on the first and third Sundays of the month. Ministers since then were P. Connel, W. Seiber, M. Henderson, D. Boundy, S. Robertson, D. Archibald and the present minister K. Eutin.

The 70th anniversary of the opening of the church was celebrated on June 8th, 1958, with six persons attending who had been at the actual opening. Wes and Annie (Keenan) Piercy, Irvine Piercy, Edward Graham, Flora Tweedie (Keenan), Gertie Mateer (Piket). Len Piket of Comox was unable to attend. Descendants of pioneer families having four generations at the celebrations included the Swan, Piercy, Graham and Keenan families. Rev. W. E. Seiber spoke inspiringly of the "Pioneers and the Church" and the Union Bay choir under Mrs. J. Moore's leadership, sang appropriate music. Rev. P. Connell of Vancouver, a former minister, unveiled two church photographs; one of the opening in 1889 and one taken in 1917. Plaques with the names of the pioneers accompanied the pictures.

A basket lunch was held at the community hall followed by a centennial service. Members of the pioneer families spoke of early days spent on Denman, and visited their old homes and relatives and the cemetery before leaving the island.

Electric light and power came to Denman Island in August 1957 and in 1958 light fixtures donated by the Chalmers family in memory of Mr. and Mrs. T. Chalmers, were installed in the church. Many visitors at-

tended and saw the old coal oil lamps replaced by the turning on of the power by members of the Chalmers family.

Descendants of pioneer families have been most generous with gifts to the church. The communion table given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Piercy, was given by their son Archie and family. Mr. and Mrs. F. Street donated a large bible in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Wesley Piercy.

New oak pews and an oil furnace were gifts from Mr. and Mrs. T. MacKenzie, in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Jim Piercy. An electric organ was given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. William Baikie by their sons Wallace, Harper and Jack. The Peerless communion set was given in memory of Charles McFarlan. A number of other articles donated included two antique chairs from Mrs. L. Grant and Mrs. R. Robertson.

A plaque in memory of John Graham was given by his daughters, Kitty Graham and Beth Daamgard of Victoria. Church group photographs were gifts of Mrs. T. Isbister. Ralph Mayer hand-carved several plaques and a cross.

In early days whole families used to drive to church in horse and buggies and even the horses, tied to the trees near by enjoyed the weekly get-togethers. Former residents still visit the island to relive happy childhood memories centered around this church.

The 75th anniversary service was celebrated in June 1963 when a number of visitors attended. Rev. Murray Henderson spoke of the pioneer days and Les Dean sang "How Great Thou Art". The congregation gathered out of doors after the service and presented the Henderson family with a gift. Rev. Henderson who had spent six years in this pastoral charge was moving to Victoria.

Among the firsts for the island church was the baptism of James Swan in 1889. Such pioneer families as the Swans, Piercys, Grahams and Baikies have attended continuously since 1889 and their fourth generation babies have been christened here.

The first wedding held in the church was on August 2, 1922, when Winnifred Baikie became the bride of Thomas Isbister.

The 85th anniversary was held September 23, 1975 with Rev. K. Eutin officiating. Murray Henderson was guest speaker and, following the service, a maple tree was planted by former residents James Swan and Ray Chalmers. Afternoon tea was served at the community hall when a social hour was spent reminiscing.

John Corrigan and family had the grounds cleared and seeded around the church. Small oak trees were planted which will add to the background of firs and arbutus trees in this peaceful woodland setting.



# The United Church and Ladies Aid

The year 1963 was the golden anniversary of women's work in the Denman Island United Church. The Rev. Charles Kidd, being minister here for several years around 1909-1910, returned to his home in Ontario and married. When he returned to take up his duties in this pastoral charge, it was his wife who organized the first Ladies Aid in 1913 while her son was still a baby.

It became a very active group with some 18 members during Mrs. J. Alder's leadership. Teas, sales, picnics and socials were the usual means of raising funds for the church. The women donated and helped with many projects through the years. A banquet and social was held to celebrate the 20th anniversary.

A carpet for the aisle of the church was purchased with money left to the church by Mrs. J. Ormiston. An iron railing for the steps was bought with a gift from G. Russell in memory of his wife. Wool-filled seat covers and velvet chancel curtains were renewed and in recent years an exit door was cut on the west side of the church by James Swan. The floor was sanded and varnished and new carpeting was purchased with money donated by Miss Kitty Graham and Mrs. Beth Daamgard of Victoria.

In 1950 the Ladies Aid became a part of the Women's Association of the United Church and in 1962 the organization became the "Margaret Dean Unit" of the United Church Women. Margaret Dean, a former lay minister of the United Church, had worked untiringly for the church by leadership, substituting for ministers and teaching Sunday school. Her husband, Les, was prominent in church matters and his beautiful solos will be long remembered.

Les and Margaret Dean were largely instrumental in having the church hall built. Lumber, money and labour was donated and with community help a very well-built hall was joined on to the church. Windows were given by Mrs. J. Piercy and Mrs. Tommy MacKenzie and stacking chairs and carpeting were purchased. Other gifts included a communion cloth by Mrs. A. Swan; silver communion plate and cup by Mrs. Dean who also donated furniture. Collection plate and vases were given by Percy Isbister and an electric kettle by the Wood family. Fire extinguishers were bought recently.

The dedication service was given by Rev. Murray Henderson. He also compiled the church history, written by Winnie Isbister as church historian.

United Church Women hold their meetings in the hall and socials with suppers and entertainment also take place. Vacation Sunday school classes have been held in recent years, with leaders coming from Vancouver Island.

Membership in the United Church Women for 1975 is around 15. They have been hostesses to the World Day of Prayer services several times in recent years when visitors from Union Bay United Church and from St. Saviour's Anglican church attended.

## Sunday School

The first Sunday School on Denman Island was organized by Theodore Nelson in 1889. Twenty children were enrolled and twelve adults attended a bible class. William Baikie assisted with classes and later on Charles McFarlan taught for a time. The Methodist church had just been built and the settlers were keenly interested in its activities.

Between 1908-1910 Jack Chalmers and Mrs. G. Dalziel held classes in homes on the east side of the island, while Mrs. Elizabeth Graham held classes at her home on the west side. For a time Sunday school ceased until Rev. and Mrs. J. Alder reorganized it and held classes before the morning services. Miss G. Alder was a teacher and organist for a number of years.

During Rev. Andrew Walker's ministry, Miss E. Patterson, a school teacher, organized a Canadian Girls in Training group which remained active for a few years. From 1925 the Sunday school history has been spasmodic. Mrs. J. Hobbins organized a Cradle Roll. Rev. M.S. Eby, who was interested in the young people, established a Young People's class and he took the boys on boating and camping trips. At this time three large progressive Sunday school classes were taught by John Mosely, Miss J. Morgan (later Mrs. J. Piercy) and Miss Muriel Dalziel (later Mrs. G. Thornbery).

Towards the end of Rev. F. Chilton's stay a number of families moved from the island, thus resulting in a decreased enrolment. For a time Mrs. J. Corrigan held a primary class at her home. Mrs. D. Drinkwater held classes at her home for a time. For several years there was no Sunday school. In the fall of 1958 Rev. Murray Henderson reorganized it, holding classes before the service. Mrs. Les Dean was appointed Sunday school superintendent and for some years had a very active group with classes being held in the morning at the church. The cooperation of the Anglican families was most helpful with Mrs. J. Kirk and Mrs. J. Drinkwater teaching the senior and intermediate classes. Mrs. Dean taught the primary group. The church hall was built in 1963 and classes continued until Mr. and Mrs. Dean moved away.



## Picnics

In the early days of this sparsely populated community social events were few and far between so the annual Sunday school picnic was looked forward to by both the children and the adults. Families gathered in happy fellowship and the many hardships of pioneering were forgotten for the day.

Later, during the first few years of 1900, a large joint picnic was held in Harve Piercy's field. This was a big event for the islanders. George Howe of Union Bay arranged for the Collieries' tug to ferry a scow load of Sunday school pupils and their parents over to Denman wharf and they walked the short distance along the beach to the picnic grounds. A highlight for the children was when Mike Manson arrived and opened his usual tub of candies which he scattered around on the grass for them to hunt. Mr. Manson was wharfinger for the Collieries and he later became M.L.A. for the Comox district. Games, sports and swimming were competed in and usually the final event was an exciting tug-a-war between the farmers and the miners.

Alby Graham took picnic parties on his tug the "Rex" to Henry Bay, Metcalfe Bay and, on May 24, 1912, to Saint John's Point, Hornby Island. The people from the west side boarded the Cook Bros.' launch at Chalmers beach. The day was beautiful and the two-hour boat ride was part of the fun, and young boys were kept busy all afternoon rowing the picnicking parties across the short distance to Flower or Flora Island. The small island was a mass of color from the many lovely spring flowers and cactuses which are in full bloom at this time of year.

Tree Island at the north end of Denman is another beauty spot and many varieties of wild flowers grow there. Several Sunday school picnics were held there. The Union Bay people arranged for a landing barge for transportation and the Denman Islanders were picked up at the Denman wharf.

In late years the picnic was held at Mountain View resort at the south end of Denman, when the Cumberland and Union Bay classes and parents joined the islanders. The most recent one was held at Edward Millard's beach.

## Denman Cemeteries

William Keenan who came to Denman Island around 1877 and died a few years later, was the first white person to be buried on the island. The grave was dug on his brother Tom's property not far from the present school.

Jim McFarlan died in 1886 and was buried on the east side of the island on the J. McFarlan property. Later Mr. and Mrs. John Graham and a small daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A. Graham were buried in this family plot.

When the Methodist church, now the United, was completed in 1889, a plot for a churchyard was allotted near the back of the building. Half a dozen graves were dug here but situated as it was on the hill top, the cemetery proved too rocky.

It was decided when Thomas Piercy passed away on September 11, 1904, that a more suitable location was essential. Jack Scott donated a half acre of his property near to the east side of the island for the purpose. Mr. Piercy was buried in a corner plot near to the road. The grave was enclosed by rails until the men of the island cleared the land and marked and fenced the new cemetery.

Most of the settlers chose their family plots in the next few years and at the present time few spaces are available. Eventually remains were moved from the old churchyard to the new cemetery and also those from the McFarlan property.

The Coronation Oak tree from Windsor Park, England was ceremoniously planted in the cemetery in June 1939. This was thought to be a safe spot as stock ran on the roads at that time.

A parade was held at the school grounds where decorated bicycles and costumes were judged. Coronation mugs donated by the Denman Island Women's Institute, were presented to the pupils. The children marched to the cemetery where their parents and friends had gathered to watch the tree planting ceremony. William Baikie conducted the service and planted the Coronation oak from Windsor Park.

The tree grew tall and splendid until through some misunderstanding it was cut down by a B.C. Hydro workman. Luckily it had a wonderful root system and it grew back and has been trimmed and is making rapid growth again.

The Women's Institute arranged Work Bees for many years to clean up the cemetery for Easter. The work was later carried on by Denman Island Branch 234 of the Royal Canadian Legion.

At present a committee has been appointed by the plot owners to arrange for the maintenance of the cemetery. Several former residents have made donations to this cause.



# Saint Saviour's Anglican Church

By Mrs. Doras Kirk

An historic edifice is the work of pioneers. It was called the "Little Church on the Hillside," by Rev. E. O. Robathan back in 1925.

"A meeting of the Church of England people was held at James F. Street's home at 8 o'clock, and it was unanimously decided to build a church on Denman Island," according to the old minutes which dated this historical gathering as July 30, 1913.

The land for the building already had been given by Sir Henry Crease in 1887, and originally comprised a little over an acre. Judge Crease's one condition was that there were to be trees. In the clearing of the building site, the workers left as many as possible.

The government expropriated a portion of the church land for the building of the road. The church wardens were allowed to use the money towards expenses on the building.

It was September of the same year when the next meeting was held and a building committee was elected. The church wardens, George Beadnell and R. Lacon; the secretary, J. F. Street, and two other workers, Doctor Meadows and Frank Nixon were voted in.

"It was decided not to employ outside help to build the church at present as the funds would not permit it," the record reads.

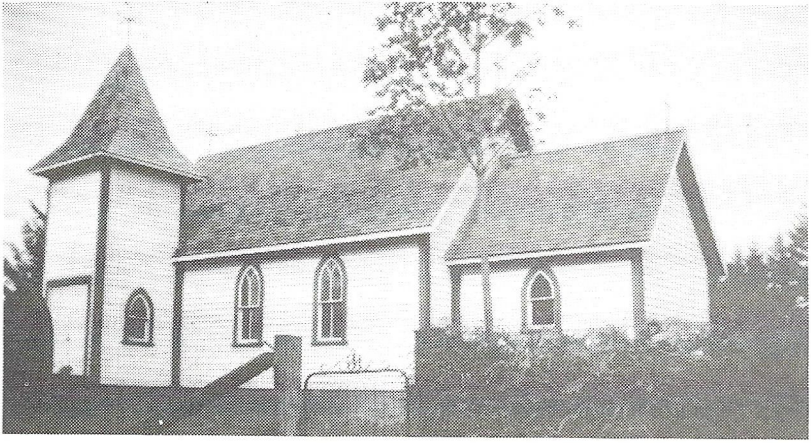
However, there was one deviation from the decision. Dr. Meadow's son, Bernard, an ecclesiastical designer by trade, and also a clergyman, was paid a nominal sum to direct the workmen.

Sam Dumaresq, manager of the Sandstone Quarry, donated a large slab of stone for the cornerstone laying, which occurred sometime in early 1914. The ceremony was performed by Rev. F. Watson, who served Denman Island from Cumberland at that time.

According to a notation in the Cumberland Church records, George Apps, people's warden there, tells me that Bishop Roper had granted permission for a parish to be established in Comox and on Denman in December, 1913.

At this rather unsettled time in history, even Denman Island was affected by the impending war in Europe. The sandstone quarry was beginning mop-up operations toward closing and many of the workers left the island to join up. It became evident that if any church building was to be put up, it must happen immediately and quickly. The church men also had their country's duties to attend to, and by the end of 1914 most of them had left.

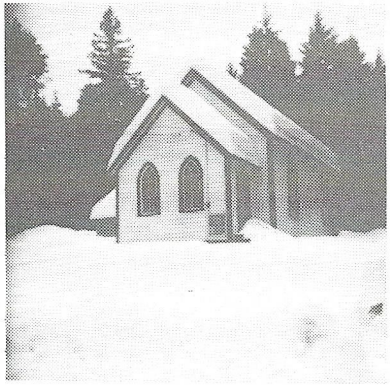
There is little record of the actual building progress but since the first service was held by the Vicar, J. Franklin Watson, "near Harvest Festival time in 1914", we must assume that at least the shell of the building was complete.



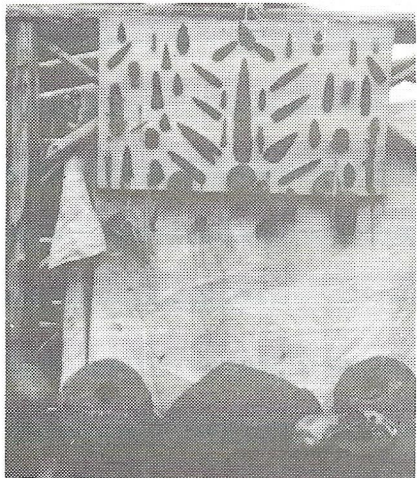
Saint Saviour's Anglican Church.



Hand-made baptismal font in Anglican Church, made by George Beadnell.



Deep snow at United Church



George Beadnell's Indian collection.





Turning the switch to connect telephone systems.



Denman Island Rural Telephone:  
Winnie Isbister, operator. 1930 - 1960.



Apple picking on the "Ranch" around 1918. C. Toy, Irvine Piercy, Dave Robertson and Sinky Swan.



The Harvey Piercy home.

In 1915, the Vicar read a letter referring to the land expropriation by the government and the desire to use the money for improvements as fencing the church yard, filling up the marsh, draining the lawn, finishing the tower and levelling the land.

A statement of expenditures dated May 1916 lists lamps, stove, prayer books, doors and windows, lumber and nails, insurance and hired help. The last would probably mean that Bernard Meadows was still working on the building with whatever other help was available. If services were being held in the building at this time we must assume that it was only in good weather as the doors, windows and heater were still not installed.

By 1917, although much of the finishing still remained to be done, the church was consecrated by Bishop Roper, and the Vicar announced that it was to be called Saint Saviour's.

Except for the first meeting to arrange the building of the church, the records of the building progress for 11 years are missing. This was only discovered in 1963 on Saint Saviour's 50th anniversary by the late Hilda Lacon, one of the original pioneers of the Women's Guild. Mrs. Lacon took it upon herself to write down what information she could recall of those early years. A quotation from her records gives a fairly clear picture of the work of the industrious few responsible for the completion of this building.

"Our Bishop Roper had helped us not to run into debt, to build only as we had the money to pay. That was a bone of contention as our Vicar had a wider outlook. . . our means were slim. Our men were going to do all the labour of building themselves. Mr. George Beadnell was indefatigable, Mr. R. Lacon drew the ground plan, (this plan is on the vestry wall to this day) and Mrs. R. Lacon stood apart and said what she thought was a Gothic pitch. We were within a decimal point of the correct pitch."

Included in the list of pioneer workers and donors were George Beadnell's wife Amy, who proposed that a cedar hedge should be planted along the roadside. An inscription inside the large church Bible reads: Presented to Saint Saviour's Church by George and Amy Beadnell, 1913.

The Beadnells were also responsible for donating the brass altar cross. The rustic baptismal font was designed and constructed by Mr. Beadnell as well as the hymn number board. The former is made from a cedar stump and a round slab hollowed out with a bowl set into the wood. The cover for the font is a unique cedar root tapering up to a small cross. The hymn board is also made of cedar with curved roots and twigs in curly cues and crosses to ornament it.

Mr. and Mrs. R. Lacon provided the church with the brass offertory plate from themselves and the pair of brass candlesticks on behalf of their son Reginald, born in 1913.

Mrs. Osler of Toronto gave the silver Communion plate, and Mrs. F.



Banks donated the remainder of the Communion set. The organ was a gift from Mrs. H. Nixon. There were various donations of money raised by the Women's Guild to provide other furnishings.

"Flower Teas" were held to raise money -- violets in February, crocuses in March, daffodils in April and so on, using a different flower each month. The women worked hard on these benefits and were able to raise enough money to allow them to send to England for special materials. These included curtains, altar hangings, brass rods, a special red carpet for the sanctuary and lino for the aisle. A notion by Mrs. R. Lacon 50 years later says: "The lino was not the one ordered, but we had to bear with it for 49 years."

The Saint Saviour's processional banner was designed and embroidered by Mrs. Heather Lacon.

The inside finishing of this little church is particularly interesting. Mrs. Hilda Lacon was responsible for the interesting application of the V-joint lumber on the walls. Bernard Meadows had already begun applying the V-joint in the conventional manner, when Mrs. Lacon persuaded him that a far more interesting effect could be obtained by nailing it on at an angle. The results did turn out to be quite attractive. Mr. Meadows also designed and built the pews, reading desk and other furnishings.

The old type square nails were used in the pews and a good part of the main building. The boards used in the pews are obviously first growth fir, flawless and without knots.

In 1925, materials were purchased for a woodshed to be built on the north side of the church. J. H. Kelsey volunteered to build it. Only a small lean-to shed remains as evidence of the project. There is no record whether a separate shed was ever built, although a sketch in the minute books shows a proposed location. There was a certain controversy over its location and whether it would spoil the appearances of the church grounds.

Mention is also made of a proposed flagpole to be erected in 1933. Again, there is no sign of such having been done.

In 1928 a formal letter was written to Sam Dumaresq asking for permission to obtain some sandstone from the Denman quarry to use in building a sidewalk. This too does not appear to have been carried out as the present sidewalk is an ordinary poured concrete walk. Possibly the lack of time and difficulty in obtaining the slabs of sandstone were deciding factors.

August 1, 1928, was an historic occasion for the "Little Church on the Hillside," This was the occasion of its first wedding with the marriage of Howard Kelsey and Miss Enid Buchanan, who was one of the early church organists.

The history of the little church is one of devotion and unselfish service by most of its small congregation. Rev. E. O. Robathan noted in one of his letters, referring to Alby Graham, who provided ferry service at the

time: "at all times and in all weather conveyed me by his launch to Union Bay and very often, I'm sure, has gone without his regular meals in order to do this service."

Early church gatherings were not large. There was difficulty in getting around with only horses to depend on for transportation. In bad weather the Rector had difficulty in getting to the island. A Harvest Festival in 1932 held a record of 50 people. The average congregation was about 16. In spite of difficulties they were able to have Sunday School classes twice a month in 1927. When this disbanded they took part in the Sunday School by Post which proved quite satisfactory.

In 1938-39 it was proposed by Cyril Lacon that: "Services be held from April to September only, owing to the unusual inclement weather experienced in the winter and the growing infirmities of most of the congregation and to the difficulty in meeting the contract fund."

Over the years maintenance and changes have been carried out by the small congregation. The kerosene lamps have given way to modern electric lighting, and the wood-burning heater replaced by an oil heater. Other recent additions on the church property include the planting of two small trees.

An Almey crabapple was donated by the Women's Institute as a centennial gift, March 9, 1965. It was planted by Frank Duxbury, Rector's Warden, and dedicated by Rev. C. Lonsdale. Mrs. J. Isbister was also present as president of the Women's Institute. The second tree, an ornamental plum, was given by Mrs. J. H. Kelsey in memory of her son William. The tree was planted on her behalf by J. F. Oatts, Nov. 15, 1966.

In her report to the congregation on the occasion of its 50th anniversary, Mrs. Hilda Lacon said: "With high hopes we built our little church for our small part for The Glory of God, and that we might be worthy of His Blessings on us and our Island Community."

## World War I

The 102nd Battalion under Colonel John Warden was stationed at Comox Spit for nearly a year. Men from lumber camps and fishing villages and from farms along the coast of British Columbia joined this battalion and were known as "Warden's Warriors".

There was very little accommodation ready at the Spit when they arrived in the winter of 1915 and they endured many hardships as snow and more snow fell during January, February and well into March. 1916 will long be remembered as the year of the big snow. Soldiers helped shovel the roofs of buildings in Comox and Courtenay and also helped to clear the highways.



The CPR steamer SS Charmer was chartered for transportation and a large number of soldiers came to Denman to put on a concert on May 16. The Denman Islanders arranged a very enjoyable dance in their honour and this was the first big event to take place in the recently opened new hall.

May 24 was celebrated at the Spit with a large picnic and sports day. Residents of the district were cordially invited and a number of Denman people hired Alby Graham to transport them to the Spit aboard his tug the "Rex".

The SS Princess Charlotte called at Comox wharf on June 10, to embark the battalion and relatives and friends from Denman were among the crowds gathered to see them off to the front.

"Warden's Warriors" saw heavy fighting in France. Tommy Lefly lost his life and James McNaught was taken prisoner. He was held in Germany for two years; later he returned to Denman where he married a Denman girl and spent the rest of his life. Frank Nixon and John Lockerby also saw service.

Bert Doney, Tom Nixon, Louis Nixon, Len Piket, Rex Wardell, Colin Cameron, Tom Scott, George Scott, John Anderson, Stanley Milton (killed) Mike Bell-Irving, Angus Bell-Irving, C.C. Lacon and H. R. Lacon enlisted in other regiments.

Veterans of World War I who came to Denman to settle were: John Kelsey, John Boulton, Sid Ryall, Thomas Isbister, Percy Hyatt, Ernest Watson, Lorne Callahan, George Wells, J. Drinkwater, J. Jerrard, Steve Veness, Percy Emerton, F.J. Oatts, C. Hadley and Dan Illingsworth.

## World War II

With local defence headquarters at Army Camp, Sandwick, Navy Barracks at Comox Spit, and the Air Force at Comox airport on Vancouver Island, Denman was often the scene of Combined Operations training for days during the Second World War. Various groups were stationed on the island and then were attacked by either or both of the other branches. Barge loads of men might be landed at strategic spots along the shore to scale wire fences and other natural and manufactured hurdles, to try to reach their objective against "enemy" opposition. During the day the forces and equipment were sought out by plane and bombed with flour bags.

Alf Randall's farm, now (Gordon Wright's) had an encampment of more than 100 men undergoing training. New classes of soldiers arrived periodically. Movie pictures were shown on a screen set up in a hay field when weather permitted and in the local Denman Island community hall at other times. The public was invited.

Sometimes a farm house was commandeered and a headquarters set up. Everything might be as quiet and peaceful as a farm usually is when a signal would be given and large numbers of soldiers would materialize from nowhere. No pictures of war manoeuvres are available as cameras were not allowed. Pill boxes were established at the north end of the island for gunnery practice, and many barbed wire entanglements were put up on Tree Island which can be reached by foot at low tide.

In one of the air exercises a plane came in so low over Metcalfe Bay that it struck the top off a tree. The plane was badly damaged but made it back to Comox airport. A year or so later a number of pieces of the plane were found when the area was logged; presumably parts of this accident.

Local boys in the forces were as following:

NAVY	ARMY	AIRFORCE
Robert Isbister	Raymond Swan	John Ryall
William Isbister	Richard Graham	Marcus Isbister
Jack Scott	Willis Piercy	David Corrigall
Douglas Wood	Nevin Maxwell (killed)	(Women's Division)
R. B. Lacon	Carl Neilson	Nancy Emerton
	Lewis Picket	
	Charles Hadley	
	Edward Kent	

A welcome home dance was arranged for returning veterans on January 3, 1946 and each one was presented with a small gift.

The Red Cross Society did good work and raised money, made jam and sent many bundles to Britain.

A home nursing class under Mrs. Harold Hastings, retired nurse, was well attended. Junior Red Cross also was organized in the school and remained active for many years.

A number of veterans from various areas came to Denman Island and bought property after the war.

## Denman Island Branch 234 Royal Canadian Legion

The organization meeting of Denman Island Branch 234 of the Royal Canadian Legion was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Isbister on March 30, 1949. W. J. Pollock of the Comox Branch and Ralph Gibson of the Cumberland Branch were present to officiate at the inaugural meeting.

Those present were - Dan Illingsworth - three years RNVR World War I, seven years Canadian Army, World War II.

Ernest Watson - Imperials, four years.

Marcus Isbister - RCAF navigation.

T.C. Husband - Imperials, October 1914 - January 1919.



J. E. Drinkwater - CEF, February 1915 - August 1919.  
George Wells - Imperials, January 1915 - April 1919.  
P.T. Hyatt - 16th Battalion CEF, August 1914 - December 1920.  
C.B. Hadley - CEF - 1914-1919. Veterans Guard - 1940-1946.  
C.C. Lacon - Imperials, 1916-1918.  
E.F. Kent, Imperials, 1916-1928. RCAF - 1939-1945.  
S.J. Veness - RCHA - 1916-1919.  
T.F. Isbister - RGA - Imperials, 1914-1919.  
Carl Nielsen - B.C. Signal Corp. - 1941-1942.

Membership of Denman Island Branch 234 in 1975 was 41.

Meetings are held monthly followed occasionally by social gatherings of Veterans, wives and friends.

Assistance to Veterans and their dependants is a primary consideration. The Branch has always been concerned with conditions in the community and has given help when necessary.

The Branch organizes the Remembrance Day campaign; every household on the island is contacted and Poppy sales are extremely good. The school is given an annual Remembrance Day talk and explanation - prizes are given for paintings, poems or essays on the meaning of this special day.

Amongst other activities the Branch has a committee that visits and checks up on resident Veterans who are sick, in hospital or in need of any kind of help. Books are sent regularly to Canadian Forces overseas.

In the past the Branch has sponsored the Denman Island Scouts, prepared picnic sites, helped with young people's sports, children's parties and supported other worthwhile local projects such as maintenance work at the Denman Island cemetery. The Branch is always actively represented at Provincial Command Conventions and Zone meetings. A member has recently been elected Zone Commander.

Above information supplied by F. J. Oatts,  
Denman Island, 17 September, 1975

Prize-Winning Poem by Leanne Strachan,  
Denman Island School

"This is Remembrance Day  
And the Poppy then is the symbol for  
The gallant men who died in war;  
And because they died, you and I are free  
That's why we wear a poppy, you see."

Major Oatts has visited the local school to talk to the children and explain the reason for Remembrance Day, every year since 1960.

Major F. J. Oatts was the recipient of a lifetime membership in the Royal Canadian Legion when the Denman Island Branch 234 held a social in the community hall on March 22, 1975. Zone Commander Elect

Marcus Isbister when making the presentation of a lifetime membership and pin commented that Major Oatts had held every office possible in the branch and that he was the first legion member to represent Denman Island at a convention. He also mentioned the Major's efforts to keep the branch together through many rough years.

Marcus Isbister is Zone Commander for the North Central Vancouver Island district, 1975-1976.

## Boy Scouts and Cubs

The 1st Denman Island Scout and Cub Troop, consisting of 11 scouts and eight cubs, gave its first social function in the form of a parents' night at the community hall where it entertained 50 parents, friends and members of the sponsoring body, the local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion 234 and the group committee.

Scout skill contests and indoor campfire where scouts and cubs entertained for the Campfire shield were held with Tod Snow, scoutmaster, master of ceremonies and organizer.

The Denman Island Scout Troop, which was active from early in 1966, received its charter at a ceremony held at the community hall. District Commissioner Robert Sibbert presented the charter.

Tod Snow received his training at Gilwell Park in England and acted as cubmaster and scoutmaster. Cubs and scouts gave a demonstration of Scout skills and knowledge.

Meetings were held weekly at the hall. The troop sponsored an annual fish derby. Islanders gathered near Fillongley beach for a picnic where the prizes were presented for the largest fish, hidden weight, smallest fish and the ladies' class winners. Fishing gear and camping equipment and a trophy were keenly contested.

The troop enjoyed many a camping and hiking trip. When Tod moved to Victoria the troop disbanded.

## Girl Guides

A Denman Island Girl Guide, Joan Kelsey, received a Guide award for life saving from the hands of Lady Kathleen Villiers. She had saved the life of five-year-old Peter Runkle when he fell into the sea. She dived in and held the boy up until help came. This took place in October 1932.

Joan was a member of the Cumberland patrol of Girl Guides under the leadership of their captain, Mrs. Jim Gregg. Mrs. Ringrose was district captain.

Joan became Brown Owl for a group of Denman Island Brownies. Mrs. Fred Piercy was in charge of this group. The girls wore their uniforms to school on Thursdays and after hours Joan came and gave instructions in



Brownie skills and knowledge. Girls belonging to the pack were Beth, Kay and Jean Isbister, Ellnetta and Audrey Millard, Ruth Corrigall, Anita Piercy, Elinor Piercy, Alice Maxwell.

Some years later when most of the girls were old enough to become Girl Guides a Lone Guide Patrol was organized. Miss Dorothy Lamb of Duncan, B.C. was their Captain and she mailed a beautifully illustrated newsletter each month. The Guides took turns reading the instructions and doing the competitions which were then returned to their Captain for corrections. All the girls were accustomed to outdoor activities and farm life so they had no trouble winning a good number of badges.

They visited special Girl Guide functions at Comox and they travelled to Victoria with the district Guides for the visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. Each summer they spent two weeks camping with their captain along with the Duncan district guides. They were able to take part in the practical activities. The Guides spent many happy hours hiking, swimming and cycling. Betty Dalziel was patrol leader and when the Guides were old enough to go away to high school the Lone Guide patrol was disbanded.

Denman Island has been a favorite spot for Girl Guide camps for many years. District patrols from Comox, Courtenay, Cumberland and Royston have enjoyed camping at the Komas Ranch at Henry Bay and at Elkhaven.

Lone Guides on Denman were Betty and Necie Dalziel, Beth, Kay, Jean and Helen Isbister, Nancy Emerton, Zeta Piercy, Betty Wright, Lillian Petersen.

## Voodoo Jet Crashes

Two airmen, navigators Captain John A. Emore of Almonte, Ontario and Captain Lawrence Bastie, 29, of Halifax perished following the mid-air collision of two Comox-based CF101B Voodoo jets of Fighter Squadron.

The accident, from which two men walked away virtually unharmed, occurred at 4:40 p.m., May 29, 1969 over the east side of Denman Island when four fighters were practising formation flying.

An eye witness to the collision said one plane seemed to come down and go into the other one. The crash was terrific and one of the planes caught fire and lost one of its wings. Both aircraft plunged down nose first. One landed above the orchard about 75 yards from Walter Schmidt's house and burst into a mass of flames in minutes and the whole orchard appeared to be a ball of flame. The other plane crashed near the barn about a quarter of a mile away in a wooded area by the beach.

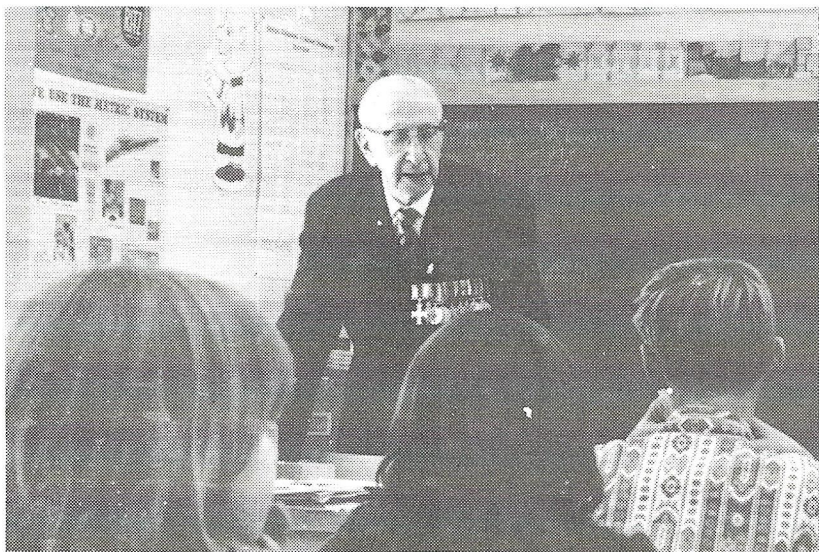
The two pilots, Lieutenant Ronald O. Little, 23, of Peterborough, Ontario and Captain Barry W. MacLeod of Richmond, B.C. parachuted down and walked a short distance to the Schmidt home.



50-ft. forestry look-out tower dismantled in 1965.

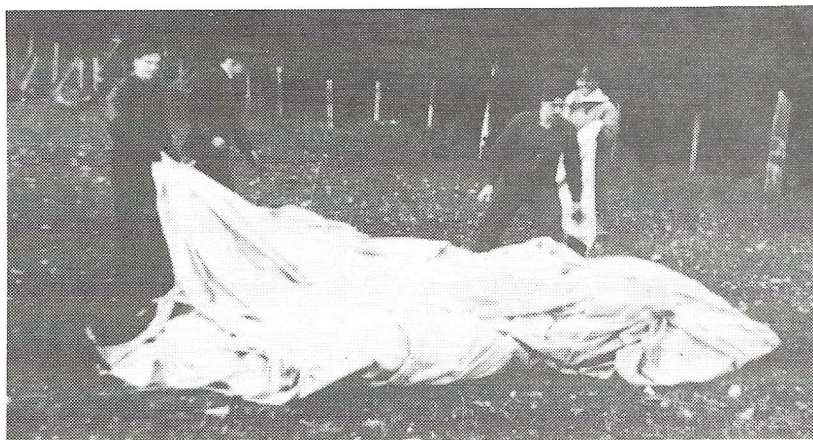


Japanese balloon bomb which landed in tree at the Komas Ranch in 1944.

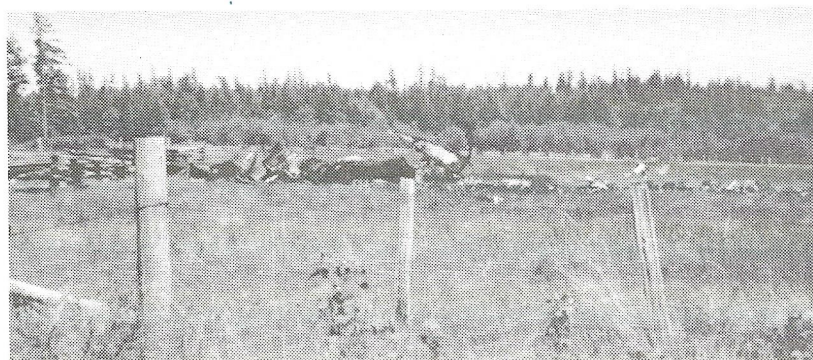


Major F. J. Oatts talking to Denman pupils about Remembrance Day. 1975.





Japanese balloon bomb when spread out, covered to a quarter of an acre.



Voodoo jet wreckage, May 29, 1969.



Denman Island Softball Team 1948

*Back row:* Ted Kent, Wes Piercy, Louie Tortorelli, Bob Isbister, Walter Schmidt,  
*Centre:* Peter Isbister, Ed Schmidt, Harold Piket, Les Parsons, *Front:* Len Tortorelli, and Fred Bradley.

A piece of the flaming plane landed near the oil and gas shed and set it on fire but neighbours who had arrived by then extinguished it. Mrs. Schmidt and her sixteen-year-old son Alan were in the house and rushed out to safety.

Many people witnessed the crash in the air and Walter Schmidt who was working on the ferry at the time went home to see what had happened. There were several farm homes near by and numerous stock but luckily no other injuries.

Almost immediately after, the crash site was secured by helicopter-borne personnel from CFB Comox who remained on the spot for some days cleaning up the wreckage. An investigation was begun immediately and the area sealed off.

Two CFB Air Element personnel died late Sunday, September 22, 1974 when their Cessna 150 aircraft belonging to the Comox Flying Club crashed in the Madigan area on Denman Island. Sergeant Ronald C. La Fountain, 36, of MacRorie, Saskatchewan and Sergeant Raymond A. Jenkins, 34, of Plaster Rock, New Brunswick were on a private training flight from the flying club. Jenkins was nearing a private pilot's licence and had only a few more flying hours to go. La Fountain who had over 1300 flying hours was on the flight as instructor and was chief instructor for the club.

The accident occurred at approximately 7 p.m. and was witnessed by several Denman residents who saw the plane come in low over the western side of the island heading towards Graham Lake. Impact occurred in a wooded swampy area.

Minister of Transport investigators were summoned and their investigation began. Police were at the site shortly after the crash and stayed on the island overnight and a campfire went out of control when a Medevac helicopter tried to land and fanned the flames and some underbrush and trees caught fire. Volunteers had the fire out by the time the foresters arrived from Courtenay.

## Earthquake

The beautiful Sunday morning of June 23, 1946 was peaceable and calm when a heavy rumble preceded the worst earthquake ever experienced in the district. The shock occurred at 10 hours, 13 minutes, 19 seconds a.m. and lasted for about 30 seconds. It was felt as far south as Portland, Oregon and as far east as Kelowna in the Okanagan Valley.

Damage was general on Vancouver Island. The epicentre was in the Campbell River area, particularly at Read Island where the land dropped in places as much as 20 or 30 feet. Land slides occurred and at Comox Lake the water rushed to one end of the lake and then rushed back.



Great cracks opened in the dyke road between Comox and Courtenay and the road was closed. Fortunately it was a Sunday as the massive chimney in the old Courtenay Central School crashed through the roof and ceiling into a classroom. The brick facing of the Post Office in Courtenay fell to the sidewalk. Nearly every chimney in Union Bay was turned around. Broken crockery, glassware and windows was extensive. More than a mile of telegraph cable was lost on the Alberni Canal where considerable changes in the depth of the water took place and also at Maple Point and Comox spit.

On Denman the shock was comparatively light with little or no damage. The earth appeared to open and close before one's eyes and buildings shook and fields of grain dipped and rose like the waves of the ocean. Horses and cows raced madly around.

The "Billy B" was crossing Baynes Sound at the time and passengers thought the boat had gone over a floating log. Water spouts were seen at Deep Bay and Captain Fiddler was drowned when his dinghy overturned at Maple Guard Point.

Several of the wells on the west side of Denman went dry and the water in a sulphur well at Tom Isbister's farm on the east side looked as if a bucket of skim milk had been poured into it and the water remained white all summer. W. Rattan who was fishing at Graham Lake felt the disturbance in the water and rowed in haste to shore.

Towards the end of Second World War a Japanese balloon bomb drifted in from the Pacific Ocean and hung up on a tree on the Komax Ranch at the north end of Denman Island. Naval men from Comox were alerted and a demolition expert came from Alberni to dismantle the bomb. The balloon when spread out covered up to a quarter of an acre.

## Mystery

One of Denman's best kept secrets is the mystery of the missing German machine guns. The veterans of the First World War had returned to their homes and were slowly forgetting their many privations when two German machine guns arrived from the government war office. George Beadnell had acquired them and had hoped to have them set up in an appropriate place with a plaque near by to commemorate those who had died during the war.

Many of the residents were not in favour of having a constant reminder of the war in their midst. Several had spent considerable time in German war camps. In the meantime the guns were stored in Dr. Meadow's shed at his home which is the property of George Walker in 1975.

A favoured memorial spot was the grassy triangle where the roads

meet near the Anglican church. Another similar spot was at the top of the mountain where the Pickles road branched off the main road.

A general meeting was called at the community hall to decide where the guns would be placed. Dr. Meadows mentioned to a friend he had not remembered seeing the guns recently so this report was quickly investigated and Dr. Meadows reported back that the guns had vanished and not a trace could be found. They had simply disappeared so naturally the problem was solved. The grassy spot soon disappeared with the increase of motor traffic but it was a lovely spot in the horse and buggy days.

There was much speculation as to what had happened to the guns. The popular opinion was that they were removed from the shed and dumped over the wharf or had been rowed out a distance and dumped overboard. No trace has ever been found and the secret was well kept by the few who did the deed and are no longer with us.

Some day a skin diver may locate what remains of the guns and we will have them back as a relic.

## An Unsolved Mystery

Adam Grant Horne was a highly esteemed pioneer who managed the Hudson's Bay store on the Comox Indian reserve. While he and a friend from Cowichan were exploring on Denman they came upon a large old tree with a weird stone wall surrounding its trunk. Upon scaling the wall, Horne found the strange crypt to be empty. On one side of the tree, carved deep into its bark, was the number 1817 and the letters P. I. Horne carefully inspected the trunk for further markings, but this was all. He gently pared off the inscribed bark, giving a piece to his companion and keeping the other for a souvenir. This was in the summer of 1883 and there were very few settlers on Denman.

Who was P.I. and why had he carved his initials in the trunk of a tree on an island which was unexplored by whites in 1817? Why was he imprisoned in this strange tomb? Indians would have enslaved or killed a stranded sailor and the sturdy construction of the stone wall would indicate the craftsmanship of "civilized" mortals. Once interned the prisoner was doomed to serve his sentence in a cell which did not provide shelter from the rain and snow and did not allow him the luxury of lying down.

Unfortunately, Horne did not search the earthen floor for evidence of bones. Although still sturdy, the stone wall appeared quite old; the carvings also looked to have been executed many years before Horne's chance discovery. If, indeed, poor 'P.I.' had been walled up alive -- by whom?

By T. W. Patterson  
The Daily Colonist Sunday



## Denman Island School

In 1878 a group of energetic young farmers built the first small school on a location near the centre of the island. This was a board and batten structure and the seats were benches or forms. The lumber had to be rafted from Vancouver Island. The first school north of Wellington was built in 1871 in the Comox settlement.

John McCutcheon was the first Denman schoolmaster and, according to the register, there were three McCutcheons, five Grahams and six Piercys attending. The McCutcheon family moved away and Samuel Crawford, who had taught at Comox, came to Denman in 1881. By 1882 only four Grahams, Isabella, Alby, Johnny and Eddie and four Piercys, Isabella, Wes, Lena and Fred were attending. Miss Halliday taught for eleven months and Miss Alice Russell who remained for a month. She said the school was comfortable but the attendance was below ten so the authorities closed the school for some years. The students did oral work and used slates and slate pencils. Text books were very scarce and scribes and pencils almost nonexistent.

The farmers had cut the years' wood supply so as to save money to buy a new heater for the school. As the school was to be closed the government was very reluctant to let them have the stove, but Bob Swan persisted with his argument that it would be needed whenever the school re-opened and eventually the stove arrived. After many years of service the stove was replaced, the old one going to the Presbyterian (United) Church, where it again served for a number of years and when again replaced was used at the community hall.

The teachers' duties included lighting the fire, sweeping and dusting. Truth and honesty and moral lessons were stressed as well as cleanliness and neatness.

Miss Mary Harding was the teacher when the school was re-opened in March 1886. The Piket, Keenan, Swan and McFarlan children attended and the Tom Piercy family who had returned to Denman in 1888 after spending five years at Comox. Miss E. Coghlan taught for seven years, then Miss Edith King and a Mr. Robbins.

In 1896 a second school building was erected on the same site. This was a much better building with better lighting. The furniture was still hand made and two pupils sat at each desk. Arthur Fisher taught at this period.

Miss Mary Campbell was the last teacher to board with the McMillan family. Miss Violet Hardy the first to board with the James Graham family who had bought a place near the school. Then came Miss Olivia Dingwall, Mr. K. McKinnon, Miss Lula Brunton around 1904, and Miss Carter who taught for three years.

R.L. Duark came in 1907 followed by Wadham Paddon in 1908.

Denman was his first school and the year he spent there he enjoyed very much. He long remembered the regular evening dances, when sleighs or wagons or some such vehicles (no cars then) would pick up the young people from one home after another, ending up at the hall. He had never danced at all but those wonderful island girls, all so nice, very soon had him out on the floor and made a real good dancer of him, a role he enjoyed for many a year. Those were real dances -- no kidding!

Miss Margaret Hamilton came to teach in 1909 when she was 19. She wrote -- "I went to Denman Island on the CPR ship Joan to teach the children there. This was my first school and I was thrilled. Mr. George Dalziel met me and introduced me to Alma Graham, daughter of my landlady. Mr. Dalziel had his horse and buggy waiting and drove me to Mrs. J. Graham's log house near the school.

I lost no time in going down the road to the school-house, eager to see the scene of my future activities. It was a tiny square building, windows on three sides and a cloak-room across the fourth. I was amazed to see bracken growing up through the cracks in the floor and desks made of very heavy planking, blackboards also made of planks, painted a shiny black -- hard to write on and impossible for the children to see.

However, nothing daunted me, and I was happy at Denman's little school, even when in wet weather, the children and I had to get from the road to the school door over floating half-logs."

The school was in a low area and when there was a three-day southeaster there was so much water the half-log pathway across two wide ditches would float.

Miss A. Mills taught from January until June in 1910. She had the misfortune to break her ankle when a team of horses ran away down the mountain with a sleigh full of young people so the school was closed for several weeks.

When the stone quarry was operating a number of families moved onto Denman and the little red school house was overcrowded with 45 attending. A new school was built in 1912 on the adjoining plot of land. This building was a modern structure with a full basement and a furnace room. One of the older boys applied for the job of firing up for the term. The sweeping and dusting was done by one of the girls. The pay was very low, usually around \$2 a month. Five tall windows on the east side provided adequate light.

Miss Winifred P. Hayes was the first teacher and she had 45 names on the register. Her beginner or chart class was taught to sound out the words which was a great improvement on sight reading previously used. Miss Hayes had taught in New Brunswick and Edward Tait, one of the partners in the quarry, had been her pupil. His two sons, Carl and Bert were now among her pupils at the Denman School.

The school population was steadily growing. Miss Ruby E. Boake



came in August 1912 and for a time she had 54 enrolled. She also taught the class taking entrance exams for high school.

Miss Lilian Hood was a young English woman who stayed for three years. She stressed literature, art and drama and worked hard with her entrance classes. Subjects were arithmetic, reading, writing and spelling, British history, Canadian history, grammar, composition, geography, freehand drawing and painting, geometrical drawing and nature study. Pupils writing the exams had to go to Courtenay where students from the district assembled to write the government exam papers. A total of 550 marks were required to pass and the lowest passing mark in any subject was 33 and one-half.

Miss Hood's three-act cantata, "Sleeping Beauty" was presented by the pupils and she received high praise for the costumes and scenery. A former islander, Miss Jessie Fisher who took a prominent part in education in Vancouver, was spending her Christmas holidays on Denman. She said she had seen no better in the city schools. Miss Hood also started a "Players Club" and produced a number of plays.

Miss Opal Harris came in 1918 and taught high school subjects also.

Arrangements were made to re-open the little red school for the primary classes. Two teachers were hired, Miss Mildred Osterhout for the seniors and Miss Mynne Graham for the primary. 1919.

Miss Osterhout and Miss Graham conducted night classes for a time. Over the next ten years a number of teachers taught, four young women decided to make Denman their home and Miss Margery Preston married John Corrigan, Miss Gertrude McKay married Sinky Swan, Miss Sadie Hopwood married Caesar Scott and Miss Celena Ballson married Irvine Piercy. The men were islanders and owned farms.

During the early thirties the school had reverted back to one-room status. Miss Norah Turner came in 1935 and in 1936 the second room was re-opened and Miss Anne Peck came to teach the primary grades. These two teachers worked hard and they had the pupils write a history of Denman which they mimeographed. Each family received a copy and complimentary copies were given to the pioneers. The history was outstanding. They also published a school paper quarterly called "Our School Clarion."

They also got most of the island women to attend gym classes twice a week during two winters making a pleasant break, especially for the mothers. They arranged a school sports circuit, meets being held at Denman, Fanny Bay and Hornby Island. A silver cup was the chief trophy and Denman gained the most points for two years out of three and won the cup outright. One meet was held each year, each school being host in turn.

During 1935 to 1938 Miss Peck and Miss Turner trained the children in dancing and singing and consequently the Christmas concerts were ex-





First school building built in 1878. Photograph was taken around 1889. Teacher, Miss E. Coghlan, Flora Keenan, Maggie Piercy, Gertie Piket, Mary Keenan, Ida Graham, Wes Piercy, Ike Grieve, Johnny Graham, Fred Piercy and Eddie Graham. *Front:* Mary Jane McFarlan, Maggie McMillan, Johnny McMillan, Nettie Swan, Gladys Keenan, Minnie Swan, Annie Keenan, Minnie Graham, Emma Graham, Sandy Swan, Howard McFarlan, Harve Piercy and Tom Piket.

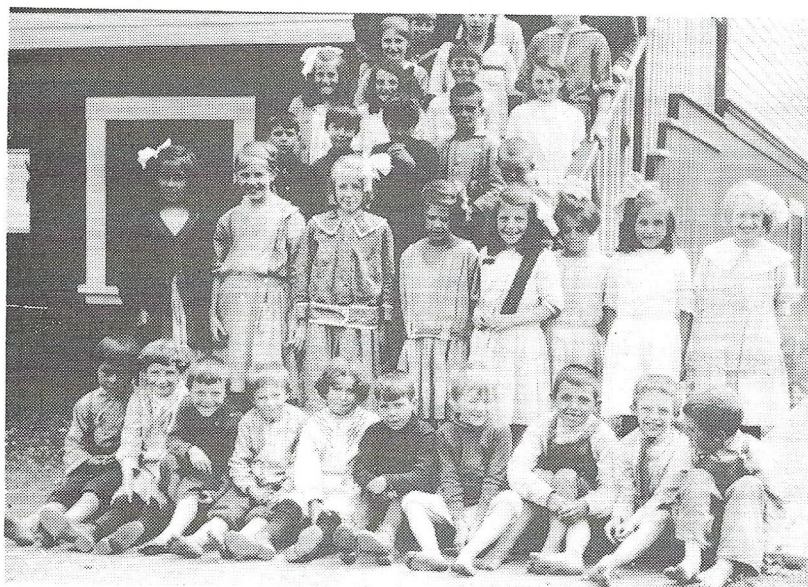


Second school built around 1896. School closing picnic 1899.





Denman Island school 1909. *Front:* Muriel Dalziel, Joe Corrigan, Eunice Baikie, Wallace Baikie, Edith Chalmers, Winnie Baikie. *Centre:* Ernest Pickles, Joe Dumaresq, Tom Nixon, Jennie Stewart, Ray Chalmers, May Pickles, "Sinky" Swan, Frank Swan, Miss Peggy Hamilton, *teacher*. *Back:* John Corrigan, Alex Chalmers, Stan Dumaresq, Caesar Scott and Jim Dalziel.



Denman Island School 1913. *Seated:* Jimmy Henderson, Archie Dumaresq, Harper Baikie, Albert Graham, Perry Dumaresq, Ernest Boucher, Tom Piercy, Willie Stewart, Clarence Graham, Bill Carmichael. *Standing:* Katie Henderson, Irene Stewart, Clarence Graham, Rose Baikie, Mary Boucher, Edith Stewart, Ruby Piercy. *3rd row:* Wilfred Boucher, Sam Dumaresq, Jack Carmichael, Ned and Jim McFarlan. *4th row:* Anna Dumaresq, Eunice Baikie, Jack Nixon, Edith Chalmers. *5th row:* Muriel Dalziel, Joe Corrigan, Bertie Dumaresq, May Pickles. *Older pupils were cut off.*

cellent. They spent hours making costumes and arranged to have the children transported to the hall for rehearsals, in the back of Bill Millard's cream truck. When Miss Turner returned to New Westminster, Miss Eileen Wright worked with Miss Peck.

For a few years at this period, the school population was nearly at capacity and then it dwindled again to a one-room size and in 1949 the enrolment was around 20. In 1946, the school system was changed and large districts under a set of seven trustees and inspector with local representatives were established. The year 1949 saw the start of a school bus which had been needed for some time on the island. Albert Graham was the first bus driver, followed by Fred Graham, Fleming Tromp, Jim Tuck and in 1975 Reg Magson transports school children from Hornby and Denman from ferry to ferry.

Tom Isbister was local representative for three years and then served four more years as a member of the District 71 school board. He attended meetings at Courtenay every two weeks and had to request a special ferry to get home as regular services stopped with the 6:30 p.m. trip from Buckley Bay. The only remuneration he received was for gas and ferry expenses.

In 1953 there were again enough pupils to warrant two teachers, one with grades one to four and the other with grades five to seven. During stormy weather the classrooms were quite dark and for a time gas lamps had been used. A power plant was purchased in 1952 and in 1957 electricity was brought to the island.

Students boarded in Comox or Courtenay while attending high school. Most of them worked for their board and came home on weekends. In 1957 Grades 7 and 8 began going to Union Bay. In 1957 District 71 arranged to have the junior and senior students travel daily to Courtenay and Cumberland, a return trip of 35 miles. The Denman school bus picked them up and transported them to the ferry. Buses picked them up at Buckley Bay and returned them to catch the four o'clock ferry to Denman. This makes a very long day and extra curricular activities have to be kept to a minimum. A dozen or so Denman children attend the Georges P. Vanier Senior Secondary school north of Courtenay.

In the sixties the primary grades were taught by teachers commuting daily from Vancouver Island. With the influx of new residents in 1974 the second class room was re-opened, and grades one to four and grades five to seven are being taught.

Merlie Isbister of Denman Island, a grade 12 student in 1960 gained a Courtenay Rotary Club award honour with her five-minute talk, "These are my Islands", a brief summary of the early settlement days. Merlie's eloquent espousal of the old ways and traditions moved the audience with complete sincerity. She was also named winner of a \$250 scholarship given by the Courtenay Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. Linda Schmidt of Denman Island, second year arts student at Notre



Dame University at Nelson, was named recipient of a \$500 scholarship by the Vancouver Foundation in 1963.

When the first school opened in 1878 six Piercy children were enrolled and they attended until 1883 when the family moved to Comox. They returned to Denman in 1888 and since that time there has been a descendant of the Tom Piercy family attending the Denman school. Descendants of Robert Swan attended from 1886 until 1973.

Upper Island school children from District 71, including those from Denman and Hornby Islands travelled on the special Esquimalt-Nanaimo train to Nanaimo where massed groups met at the Arena to welcome Princess Elizabeth and Prince Phillip on Friday, 26th October, 1951.

During Centennial year many visited the Confederation train at Nanaimo in January 1967 and the British Columbia Caravans at Lewis park in Courtenay.

## Teachers

Mary Olivia Dingwall (later Mrs. Mouat) taught school on Denman in 1901. She boarded with Mr. and Mrs. James Graham in the same house now occupied by Mrs. M. DeYoung. She wrote:

"The trustees had a very nice place for the teacher and James Graham met me on the beach with his light wagon and colt. As we drove across the island I noticed every farm looking as if it were the pride of the owner's heart, as no doubt it was. The roads were quite good, but a big hill was visible.

J. Graham was very interesting and he had an interesting wife. He showed me a photo of himself at 61, a rich man and handsome who married a much younger woman, (his second wife). Then as Victoria was booming he thought he would become still richer and he lost all his money in Victoria real estate speculation."

"Around 1903, the family moved to Denman Island where they rented the Judge Crease place (Wesley Piercy's) for several years, later buying acreage from the government, situated in the centre of the island not far from the school."

"This place had a large meadow, partly prairie which he drained and farmed. James also built a comfortable log house, one large room, a small room for the teacher, two rooms upstairs and a wide roofless verandah.

There was a beautifully constructed well-house. It was well roofed and had seating and a place to wash. The only thing was that the water was unpleasant. I thought it was a mineral spring, if so it is still one. Drinking water was brought from the next farm."

Although I was very happy in my school and in my boarding place, I missed my home at Sandwick. I went home every second week, my good fortune in the weather became a saying, "her own weather".

There was trouble in the Denman school, I never learned the cause but the one who made the trouble had known my father and liked him, so they wished me well and made no trouble for me.

I had been for my mail one morning before breakfast and as I climbed the hill I met William Baikie. He said, "Inspector Netherby came over from Hornby, when he saw me he slipped behind a stump, but I saw him."

I hurried to see if all was right at the school and he soon arrived there. He gave me a kind report and added 'She has a knack of getting along with anyone.' One of my trustees, Mrs. A. Pickles, had an only son, a handsome, brilliant boy, not too fond of work so at times he and I clashed.

Then came a letter from my mother, it said the teacher at Union Bay had resigned. She added, "I have applied in your name, the inspector supported my application, so now you are teacher at Union Bay and now no more crossing Baynes Sound in a row boat."

"What could I do? I removed to Union Bay but I was unhappy about it."

Ruby E. Boake taught school on Denman from 1912 -- 1914, and she boarded at the James Graham home also.

"Pleasant memories of a happy sojourn among very pleasant people!"

I arrived at Denman Island by the CPR boat, S.S. "Charmer". There were three C.P.R. boats a week then and one the S.S. "Chelohsin" that called at the various Islands on the way to Comox. She was a Union Steamship boat.

Those were the good old travelling days, no ferries, no cars. They were also the horse and buggy days, rather good too. If you didn't own a horse and some form of trap, cart or buggy, you walked or maybe rode a bicycle.

I was met by Sam Dumaresq, secretary of the school board. He was manager of the stone quarry, the only industry on the island except farming and logging. The quarry was due to fold up after losing a scow load or two of stone on its way to Vancouver due to bad weather. Dumaresq was a likely choice to be on the school board as he was father of six children, five of them at school. He drove a smart horse and light open buggy and drove me to see the school and to the place where I was to board.

The school was more or less in the centre of the island, one roomed and almost new, and much more modern than the old one, with windows along the left side only, good blackboards, up-to-date desks, and a good wood-burning furnace. There were over forty pupils, and for a time there were 54 on the roll call, all grades, including entrance class. There was a very regular attendance as they were trying to get a two-room school there which they did after I left, but it didn't last long after the quarry closed.



There wasn't much excitement in those days but every one invited me to visit them, so I walked miles and miles on those gravelled roads but everyone was most kind to me and the tea kettle was always pulled forward on that good old wood stove and out came the goodies -- good home-made bread and butter, scones, Scotch oat cakes, shortbread and little pancakes, made especially for afternoon teas.

There were still three pioneer women living on the island, the women who had attended each other during confinements, helped when someone had an accident or taken ill; these marvellous women always did all they could until a doctor was available. However while I was there a retired doctor and his family from England came to live on the island and he administered to the need of the people. If I remember correctly he was paid the princely sum of \$300.00 a year and supplemented by his pension and whatever he garnered from the residents of the island.

For recreation we had the occasional dance and often were able to go to Comox, as the boat called Friday afternoon and returned on Sunday. There were occasional plays and concerts at Comox, always arranged for the weekend. One time we all got enthused over a barn dance up there. It was danced to the music of a hymn. I can't remember what hymn it was. When we met on the road, we'd start to hum and do a little barn dance on the road.

Everyone sewed, made dresses and even hats, did knitting, crocheting and embroidery. Later Elsie Spencer introduced pillow lace making and it still thrives there.

A funny thing happened. Oddly enough and quite unintentionally on my part, for the first and only time in my life, I started a fashion. Somewhere I had acquired a little black velour hat that everyone seemed to like, so when spring came I decided to make a hat to match a summer dress I had. Most of the shopping was done by catalogues, as most people hadn't the money to spread around that women have nowadays. So I cut a pattern from my hat -- just four acorn shaped pieces for the crown and a circular shaped brim. It turned out very well but no one asked for the pattern. That wasn't done! but when I was leaving at the end of the term, I gave the pattern to someone and it got passed around.

The next summer when I returned for a visit my hats were everywhere. Tiny versions were worn by babies in their prams, large wide brimmed versions were worn by men in the fields, and when I went to church on Sunday, a whole row of little girls sat in front of me with them on, modified versions of course. Some had a band of striped material cut on the bias around the crown, some were made of two kinds of material, brims were varied in size and shape, a bow or buckle was added, but all originated from my pattern. I am afraid I was so amused that I couldn't tell what the text was that Sunday!

Another amusing thing happened some years later after I was married and had a bouncing, eight-months-old daughter. Denman by

then began having fall fairs in the new hall. William Baikie had offered to take my mother, who was visiting me at the time, and myself and baby to Buckley Bay on Fair Day. He was working for the forestry and stationed at Courtenay for the summer. He had a car but there were no ferries then! Just launches of various kinds transferred the people across to the wharf on Denman.

On the launch to which we were assigned was a well known Comox resident, huge, bluff, capable, with a heart of gold, even if his khaki suit and big straw hat didn't proclaim him as the latest exponent of men's fashions. Most of the rest of the passengers were government employees from the Department of Agriculture, who were to judge the chickens and livestock.

When we reached Denman, my rough and ready friend said, "Give me that baby, she's too heavy for you to carry up the hill." There weren't many cars on Denman at the time and I was very glad to be relieved of the chore of carrying my big baby girl up the hill. My friend's long legs soon strode up the hill and he arrived long before I did.

At the hall he also came around several times and carried the baby while I had a chance to look over the exhibits. Of course some of my former pupils were entranced by my baby, and finally one little girl sidled up to me and said: "Miss Boake is that the man you married?"

I think I should finish with one story that always intrigued me. They used to tell of one farmer who took three days to pay his taxes. He lived on the east side of the island and I think he was Johnny Morrison.

On the first day, he loaded his canoe on his wagon, drove across the island to the wharf, cached his canoe somewhere in the bushes and drove home for the night. Next morning bright and early, he walked across the island, retrieved his canoe, rowed to Union Bay, walked up to Cumberland, where the government offices were, paid his taxes, walked back to Union Bay. Rowed across to Denman, hid his canoe again and walked home. The third day he drove over and secured his canoe again, drove home, happy to feel his taxes were paid for another year.

Johnny Morrison constructed a barn by himself with the help of his team of oxen. He hewed and squared bents out of logs and raised them by tying a rope to the ring in each of the ox's nose. When the bent was raised in a perpendicular position he tied the ropes to a log so the oxen could not back up. He was able to brace the bent while it was held in place.

One day when Johnny was driving his horse and team of oxen home from the wharf they were approaching the little steep hill near the United Church when five or six of the Corrigan cows came running down the hill towards them. The horse shied and backed up and the wagon with his provisions was upset over the six foot bank. Afterwards whenever Johnny drove past this spot he blindfolded his horse.



## Memories of the Little Red Schoolhouse

I have many happy memories of my school days on Denman Island. I started the day I reached my sixth birthday as was the rule in those days. I was the only little girl for a time but four teenage girls had returned to school in order to keep the school open. The work was all oral and we used slates for a few years. We washed our slates between lessons with a rag and water from a little bottle we kept in our desks. We used pen and ink when we wrote in our copy books. The girls usually kept little bouquets of flowers in ink bottles set on their desks.

The older girls built a wonderful pentagon shaped playhouse by placing pickets one on top of the other until the walls were over five feet tall. The cracks were filled with moss and boards were used for a roof. Boxes served as furniture and with flowers and pretty dishes it was real cosy. With a coal oil can for a stove they were able to cook apples, potatoes and make tea. One night Keenan's cows from the farm next door broke down the fence and managed to completely ruin the playhouse.

Francis Graham had a pet ram lamb who would bunt and it followed him to school. The little girls were terrified of it and used to sit on the roof of a shed until the teacher arrived.

By 1909 the Corrigan and Dumaresq families had arrived and enrolment had risen to 20. The boys nailed slats on the trunk of a tall fir tree in order to climb up and tie a strong rope from the branches to be used as a swing. A seat was fastened to it several feet from the ground and four or five feet of rope was left hanging. Some one would straddle the seat and someone would race back and forth with the rope to work up speed. Occasionally a young one swinging when the school bell rang would have to wait until the momentum slowed down so he could reach the ground with his feet.

The boys played marbles and ball games. Someone would bring a long rope and we had lots of fun skipping on the soft dusty road in front of the school as there was little or no traffic.

Most of the children had bare feet and we took turns turning the rope and speeding up for "pepper". Two pupils sat at double desks, the boys on one side of the room and girls on the other. The worst punishment for talking was having to sit with one of the opposite sex!

A little island of land surrounded on three sides by low ditches was a spot where the girls ate their lunches in summer. They also played all the old singing games "In and out the Windows" - "Here we come gathering nuts in May" - "The farmer in the Dell" - "Drop the Handkerchief" - "Here we come Lubby Lu" and "London Bridge is Falling Down".

At lunch hour if anyone was lucky enough to have a few cents we would run past the old hall to Pickles's trail and then a short distance

through the woods to Graham's store to buy chocolate chews. In winter we would run to Graham's pond (DeYoungs) to slide on the ice. No one had skates or was lucky enough to have a watch so we had to guess at the time and race back to line up. The younger ones would slide on the wide ditches between the road and the school.

We trudged to school through rain, wind and snow and often sat around the heater trying to dry out our shoes and clothes. Parents and members of the school board frequently visited the school and on many happy occasions parents attended the school closing day when report-cards, awards and "Roll of Honour" were presented for Proficiency, Department and Punctuality and Regularity. Everyone then went to the annual school picnic at Dalziel's beach. The Christmas tree and concert was a highlight. Miss Hayes used her pitchpipe when she gave singing lessons to the class.

The day we feared most was when the inspector made his annual visit. Many of the pupils were so upset they could not do justice to the questions. A visit from the doctor was even worse as few of the children had had anything to do with a medical examination.

The quarry had brought a lot of new residents and the school was overcrowded so another more modern school was built near by in 1912.

One very wet day May Pickles, Bertie and Anna Dumaresq hung their wet coats above the hot register in the hall. The doors were closed into the classroom and everyone was busy working when one of the older boys at the back of the room smelt smoke and opening the door discovered the celluloid buttons on the coats were afire. Everyone rushed outside and some threw their coats down the steps. The big boys had thrown out the burning coats and the only other mishap was that several thermos bottles were broken.

The yard on the east side of the school was cleared and levelled but the portion on the west side was still piled high with charred logs. The boys used to climb the new wire fence and run around on the logs. The teacher had warned them if she caught them climbing the fence they would get the strap. All was well for a time and then one day they forgot so seven or eight boys and girls had to line up before the class and be punished. The teacher was very strict but rightly so as she taught over 45 pupils ranging from beginners to entrance class.

Across the road behind the well lay a long springy log held up by another log. This made a lovely swing and an ideal spot to sit and eat our lunches. The boys enjoyed a hunting game. They chose sides, the hunters filled their pockets with fir cones and chased through the woods after the supposed deer. The girls built lovely fern houses from the tall bracken which grew along the roadsides.

Another exciting game was a paper chase. One group set out through the woods dropping bits of paper along the way until they found



a good place to hide. The other group had to follow and try and find them. Kick the Can and Duck on the Rock were other games.

We enjoyed walking to school with the other families. In spring we kept records of weather, birds and flowers. In summer we picked the wild strawberries, salmonberries, blackberries and wineberries and carried them home in our tin lunch pails and ate them covered with thick cream.

A sweet crabapple tree in Baikie's orchard was a favourite spot on the way home and then on to the huge plum tree at Chalmer's which was just loaded with small wine-coloured plums. We could eat to our heart's content. Later we would gather at the beach for an evening of swimming and fun. Youngsters in those days amused themselves. They spent hours exploring the beach and used to make many a trip up past Fillongley to the Sand Bluffs. The boys used old boards and driftwood from the shore to build Shanty XI and Shanty XII where they had wonderful times sitting around their old drum stove but unfortunately one day they caught fire and burned down. The boys made bows and arrows and sling shots and whistles when the sap began to run. Walking around on stilts was lots of fun. Of course in haying time riding on top of the load and jumping from the beams into the hay mow was great sport. We also drove the team to haul up the fork loads of hay into the mow.

Around 1915 a pet ram belonging to the Jack Scott family followed the older boys to school. He came up into the classroom and caused a panic on several occasions. Jack was annoyed because he could not find a hole in the fence and also at having to go to the school to bring the lamb home. The visits ended when it finally leaked out that the boys were letting the fence down.

School was closed for several weeks during the big snowfall in February 1916. Joe and Stan Dumaresq made a strong iron runnered bobsleigh at the quarry black-smith shop. There was just a narrow trail up the mountain road and no traffic to worry about so the Dumaresq and Baikie families spent many happy hours sleigh riding. Stan would lie down to steer and the others sat behind him to enjoy the long ride from the top of the hill right down to the culvert at Grieders. One day we all up-set into the high snow bank when May Pickles umbrella got caught.

When school opened the boys used to haul their sleighs and ride down the church hills.

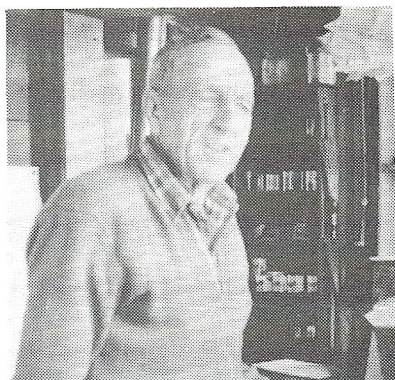
The Baikie family moved to the Adey house, later Bergener's, in November 1913. Once when the snow was deep and frozen hard we made snow-shoes out of the ends of apple boxes and nailed strips of cloth to tie around our legs. We were able to carve our initials far up on the telephone poles. The snow was piled up level with the low lean-to so the boys used to climb up on the roof of the house and slide down.

It was difficult getting supplies from the store so Mr. Baikie rode old Nob down and walked back leading the horse who had a can of coal oil tied on one side of his back and a sack of rice on the other.





Log cabin at Beaver Pond - Tommy Scott, Miss Winifred Hayes (*teacher*) Kitty, Johnny and Beth Graham, Rose Piercy and Mrs. J. Graham. 1910.



Wadham Paddon taught school at Denman in 1908. When photo was taken he had been Postmaster at Quick, B.C. for 47 years.



School hike at Henry Bay. *Back*: May Pickles, Miss Mildred Osterhout (*teacher*), Wallace Baikie. *Centre*: Rose Baikie, Miss Mynne Graham (*teacher*), Harper Baikie, Gaston DePape, Alma Scott. *Front*: Jack, Winnie, and Eunice Baikie. Photo taken in 1919.



Inter-sports day at Fanny Bay, June 10, 1939. Kay, Bill, Jean, Beth and Peter Isbister





1922. *Back row:* Miss Gertie McKay (*junior teacher*) Walter Chudy, Harper Baikie, Clarence Graham, Albert Graham, Tom Piercy, Jack Phillips, Mary Robertson, Rose DePape, Dorothy Graham, Ruby Piercy, Anna Chudy, Miss Margery Preston (*senior teacher*). *Second row:* Leo Savoie, Roy Piercy, Arnold Graham, Jack Piket, Bill Chalmers, Harrison Piket, Jack Baikie. *Third row:* Grace Robertson, Edna Swan, Vera Graham, Eileen Kelsey, Vi Fulton, Kay Wood, Lena Robertson, Myrtle Piercy, Bernice Fulton, Madeline Dickson, Florence McFarlan, Stella Swan, Eva Scott, Millie Wood, Thelma Piket, Beryl Dickson, Josephine Savoie. *Front row:* Lottie Swan, Lillian Fulton, Lindsay Dickson, Douglas Emerton, Cecil Piket, Inglis Dalziel, Malcolm Carmichael, Lawrence Piercy, George Wood, Bernard Emerton, Jim Robertson, Ernest Graham, Cyril Doheny, Henry Chudy.



School concert Christmas 1938. Miss A. Peck and Miss N. Turner (*teachers*) Beth Isbister, Lillian Petersen, Zeta Piercy, Necie Dalziel and Evelyn Bates.



*Boys:* Alan Corrigan, Bill Bullen, Omar and Hughie Robertson. *Girls:* Elinor Piercy, Ellnetta Millard, Kathleen and Jean Isbister.



Inter-Sports day, June 24, 1938  
Kathleen and Beth Isbister.



Denman Island girls inter-school sports day, 1938. *Back* Betty Wright, Lillian Peterson, Necie Dalziel, Zeta Piercy, Beth Isbister. *Centre:* Ruth Corrigan, Jean Isbister, Kay Isbister, Evelyn Bates Lila Peterson, Alice Maxwell. *Front:* Ellnetta Millard, Elinor Piercy, Audrey Millard, and Beverly Piercy.

That was a long winter and in the spring old Nob, Swan's horse and one of Pickles' died. Eating dry hay for so long had given them the heaves.

A big highlight in early days was attending the Comox Valley fall fair. Usually our uncle, George Leighton, met the steamer at Comox and drove us to Courtenay. We passed the Comox Indian reserve and saw the big totem poles and the long house. Among other exciting things was the tug-a-war between the farmers and the sailors from the Naval ships at Comox. Another trip was a visit to Cumberland. We boarded the steamer at Denman and at the Colliers' wharf at Union Bay we boarded the train and enjoyed the eight mile ride to Cumberland. We stayed with Aunt Belle and visited the big stores. Occasionally during the summer we accompanied our parents when they rowed to Union Bay with produce for George Howe's store. We landed on a small rock jetty in front of the store. The trip home was pleasant listening to the splash of the oars and eating peppermint, strawberry or wintergreen stick candy as we sat perched on top boxes of groceries or a coil of rope. We were tired after the four mile drive home in the wagon.

Little girls were supposed to sit and act like little ladies. We had to wear our straw hats to protect our complexions. Girls with freckles tried to fade them by bathing their faces in buttermilk. Saturday evening was bath night and we washed our long hair and then our mothers put our hair up in rags. On Sunday morning when the rags were unwound we had long ringlets which were tied back with a large pink or sky blue bow which matched the wide sash we wore with our lovely white lawn dresses. Mothers sewed their girls' dresses and spent much time tucking and flouncing them but when Eaton's or Simpson's catalogues arrived girls looked frantically for a special dress which they wanted to order right away in case another girl would get it first. Large leghorn hats, bedecked with roses, forget-me-nots or daisies and streamers were a must like the Eaton's Beauty dolls were at Christmas.

In winter girls wore navy serge dresses often livened with lace collars and white pinafores. Sunday dresses were usually velveteen and red and royal blue were favourite colours but mothers thought dark green or brown more serviceable. Girls put their hair up on top when they were around eighteen and became young women but they were well chaproned at social events.

Boys wore cloth knee pants and a highlight in a boy's life was when he got his first long pant suit. We were always glad when the days warmed up in May and we could discard our long underwear and stockings. Often we took off our shoes and stockings on our way home from school. Daring boys went in swimming well ahead of the usual time and there were always a few tomboys who loved to climb trees and ride their brother's bikes. Flying kites made from newspaper and sitting on a shed roof trying to see who could blow the most beautiful bubbles with a clay



pipe were other pastimes. Boys loved to go on hikes through the woods or go trout fishing in the creeks or lakes. One young boy had quite an adventure one day when he went exploring on one of the logging roads above Beadnell's. He kept walking and walking and eventually came out on the west side of the island opposite Union Bay so, getting his bearings he headed home and then came out at the top of the mountain road. He hurried home then on the main road and when he arrived home he had never been missed. He was in the habit of spending many hours with the neighbours' families as his mother was crippled and not able to get around very much.

## School Days

By Beth McKinnon

Denman Island School was a great place to attend in the thirties. It was small; between twenty and thirty students aged six to fourteen were enrolled in grades one to eight. One teacher usually taught all grades but for several years in the mid thirties Miss Nora Turner and Miss Anne Peck each had a class. Most of the students were related and the school really was like one big family. Everyone played together, big kids and little ones, boys and girls. This was necessary to make the games any fun.

We played Duck on the Rock, a wild dangerous game. Each player, using a large rock, tried to dislodge his opponents' rocks from the huge white stone in the schoolyard. How no one was hurt I'll never know!

Another favorite game was Prisoner's Base, played at the back of the school. We used the wooden toilet buildings as bases. We played Over the School with a rubber ball and Run Sheep Run in the unlighted basement. Often we had paper chases through the woods. More than one bell went unheard because we were too deep in the bush. Knobbies, a form of lacrosse, was played with a forked stick and a puck made from an old rubber hose. Softball was popular in the spring. We had one ball and bat and no mitts. Needless to say we looked after that ball.

The older boys had a log cabin in the woods behind the school. They had a stove in it and used to eat their lunches there. Rumour has it that they smoked home made cigarettes, using spiraea weeds rolled up in leaves.

A well across the road, with a bucket on a long rope, supplied the school with water. In the cloakroom was an earthenware cistern complete with metal dipper. I remember how horrified one teacher was. We brought our own cups after that and hung them carefully on a labelled hook. Funny thing though -- I didn't get one contagious disease until I went off to high school in Comox.

The old furnace didn't work and the school was heated by a wood burning stove. A senior boy got two dollars a month to get the water from

the well and keep the woodbox full. My cousin Necie Dalziel and I swept up the school every afternoon and split the money. Adventurous boys used to climb up between the two rooms and startle city teachers by thumping on the walls.

A high point in the school year was the Christmas Concert. The whole school took part and the entire island came to watch the performance. Santa Claus came and distributed gifts from the huge fir tree in the corner of the hall. The Women's Institute bought the gifts, one for each child on the island. Each school student also got a bag of candy and a Japanese orange. Pure gold to depression children. Upstairs a giant feast of cake and jello and whipped cream waited.

Denman School usually competed against Fanny Bay and Union Bay in a school track meet. This event was held in June and everyone took part. Once the entire school went to Hornby by fishboat for a track meet and picnic. The Women's Institute provided winner's ribbons and free ice cream. As there was no electricity on the island we seldom got ice cream. This was a great treat for adults and children alike.

I remember good times and good friends at Denman School. Those were the days!

Type of Compositions written by  
Beth Isbister in Grade VIII

### *Character*

It is commonly believed that every mortal on earth has a double. This likeness pertains only to physiognomy and physical resemblance for every person has his own and alone his own -- his character. How often we are apt to judge a person by his size -- his personal strength, height and weight -- never stopping to think about the thing that makes the man -- his character.

There are certain traits we can develop such as kindness, generosity, dignity, and a few of these graces and must try to edify them. This is often hard to accomplish. Good moral and mental standards are among the uppermost cures for a bad character. Self-respect is very essential. Proper surroundings are also of a great help.

Most people become great by a good character - barring dictators who merely have an overpowering character gone to seed. Sternness and ability to command are all right - but can be carried too far. The golden merits of some people are worthy of great cognizance. Their deeds serve as inspirations to all.

A nation with lasting power can only be wrought when its citizens refrain from selfishness and work for the common good -- one for all and all for one. If each one would take up a standard of honour -- this would be possible -- not just the vision of a few. Our nation would be the envy of every other nation.



## Courage

Everyone admires courage. It is the trait which all wish they had and that so few possess. A person who knows not fear can never display true courage. The man who fully realizes the danger of the undertaking but still goes forward is to be greatly admired. He, who knowingly risks his life but is still undaunted is indeed worthy of this title of honour. Courage bestows its opportunity impartially. In the highest or lowest form of life we find it, inspiring nations - striking the world with awe. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread" -- but a man of bravery rushes not like the fool who knows not. His path is the most to admire. Great deeds were not done without fear, but require will power. He who forces himself to heed not his weakness while protecting others is truly courageous. So - as long as courage is in the world we need never fear, our country shall not be vanquished.

## Bert Prince

Bert Prince was a young Englishman who came to the west coast when he was still in his teens. He fished for a time around Campbell River, Cape Mudge and at Quathiaski Cove before drifting down to Hornby Island where he had a small place near Maplehurst, a large farm belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Tom Smith.

Salmon fishing was generally very good around Yellow Rock and Eagle Rock and rowboat fishermen congregated around the southern tip of the island at Boyle Point where they could get fresh water. Bert was popular and gay and he was one of the first to build a shack here and when the little settlement grew it was named "Princetown." Billy Bampton, Donald Hastings, J. McMillan and A. Dare and his three children were among these happy people.

In those early twenties salmon sold for around 25 cents apiece and groceries were comparatively cheap.

Bert Prince left a school day's sweetheart in England who was to join him in Canada when he had a suitable place but as they only corresponded occasionally she grew tired of waiting and set out to find him. She became friendly with the conductor on the long train ride across Canada and on their arrival at Vancouver they were married. This man was quite wealthy but he had poor health and after a few years he passed away leaving everything to his wife. This lonely lady remembered that Bert had been near Deep Bay when she had last heard from him so she decided to look for him.

Finally she met some fishermen friends who had no trouble locating Bert. They were married at Vancouver and travelled to England on their

honeymoon. They returned to Vancouver where they ran a rooming house. Mrs. Prince entertained a lot and Bert became lonesome for the sea and his old friends so he used to wander the docks and one day he met Billy Bampton who suggested he get a job on the waterfront. He landed himself a job in the shipyards near Burrard Street and he worked at overhauling and repairing boats where he could smell the salt water once more.

John Carlson, an elderly fisherman, has lived at "Princetown" for many years. He spends most of his time catching fish to feed his large family of beloved cats.

## Graham Papers Come to Light

More information on the life of the late Edward Graham, J.P., Denman Island's best-loved resident for half a century, came to light in June 1975 as Jim Kirk was renovating the attic in his home, near the Denman Island General Store, formerly owned by Mr. Graham.

A roll of crumbling certificates and drawings was found revealing that when Eddy was a newly married 28-year-old marine oiler on the coastal steamship City of Nanaimo in 1903 and living in Victoria, he was taking a course with the International Correspondence Schools of Scranton, Pennsylvania, towards the Marine Engineer certificate. Although he had only had elementary schooling on Denman he received high marks in Recent Developments in Marine Engineering, Geometrical, Conic Math and other subjects.

After three years' study however, he gave up the seafaring life, returned to Union Bay and then to Denman to become a logging contractor and farmer. He died in 1965.

Mr. Kirk, formerly owner of the store and himself a collector of things historical, passed the school documents on to Mrs. Len (Madeline) Piket of Union Bay, one of the two surviving daughters of the Grahams.

## The Graham Family

January 7, 1963 was a happy and memorable day for the Islanders, former residents, family and many relatives of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Graham who called at their home to congratulate them on their diamond wedding anniversary.

Mrs. Graham (Elizabeth Lovitt) was born January 14, 1869 in London, England. She worked in Guy's Hospital, London, prior to coming to Vancouver in 1896, where she was governess to Mayor F. Buscombe's family. She worked at the Royal Jubilee Hospital, Victoria, until 1903



when she married Edward Graham of Denman Island at Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria.

Mr. Graham, one of a family of ten of Mr. and Mrs. John Graham, was born in New Brunswick, came to Denman at the age of two. His parents were one of the earliest pioneer families, arriving around 1878.

As a young man he took part in the Alaska gold rush and he later worked as an engineer on the SS City of Nanaimo.

The young couple resided at Union Bay for a few years before moving to Denman Island around 1908. He was a partner in the Graham Brothers sawmill, and later logged and farmed. He served many years on the board of the United Church and was at the official opening of the Methodist (United) Church in 1889. He served as Justice of the Peace from 1928 until 1965.

Mrs. Graham was also active in the church and Sunday school. She passed away at Sandringham Private Hospital, Victoria, June 15, 1967, at the age of 98. The Grahams had a family of three sons and three daughters. Mr. Graham passed away in 1965.

## Frank Stewart

A man of the woods who spent more than 60 years of his life in the deep forests of Wisconsin, Denman Island and the Sooke area died at the age of 94 as he lived - in harness. Frank Stewart left Scotland at the age of 20 and worked for 20 years rolling logs down the rushing rivers of Wisconsin and driving teams of horses in logging camps. He came west and joined the Alaska gold rush in 1898.

The woods called him and he came to Denman Island in 1905 as teamster for George Doane when he logged at Henry Bay and at George McFarlan's property, later Mosely's. He loved his horses and was an expert at hauling logs with his eight-horse team. He also worked for Howard McFarlan at Henry Bay.

His family lived in a small house near the school and when they moved away around 1923, Bill Millard who had bought the place, moved the house to higher ground and built on to it. He also moved the old red schoolhouse from across the road for a work shop but unfortunately both buildings were destroyed by fire in 1951.

Frank Stewart decided he was too old for the woods so he worked on farms to be near animals. His later years were spent in Victoria with his daughter. One summer he had a job driving a horse-drawn tally ho but he found that traffic was a far cry from the woods so he took up gardening.

## Gilbert Franklin

Gilbert Franklin came to Denman Island in 1906 from Salt Spring Island, arriving by sailboat. He built a floathouse at the mouth of the creek running into Henry Bay and being a great outdoors man and hunter he spent much time at Tree Island, a favourite spot for hunting brant. He carved realistic brant decoys which he placed near to the shore and, from a blind set up on the beach, he would imitate their calls. He sold the birds he shot at 75 cents a pair. He also carved mallard decoys.

Mr. Franklin was a great lover of nature and an experienced photographer who took many local scenes with his expensive camera. He did his own developing and tinting and sold a good number of his pictures.

He was a taxidermist also and his stuffed pheasants, many birds and deer heads were lovely.

He grew a good garden and canned the surplus.

He had crossed the Atlantic 13 times. His father worked in the Cunard Line office in Montreal and his mother was related to one of the officials in the Cunard Line. She came to Denman Island to visit him once and stayed with Mr. and Mrs. James Ormiston. Mrs. H. R. Lacon was a first cousin of his.

In 1921 he moved to Victoria and married there before returning to the United States of America where he and his wife started a photography business.

## The Lacon Family

In September 1911, Harry Beadnell of Comox came over to Denman to hunt pheasants with his old friend, William Baikie. He was accompanied by H. R. Lacon, whom he introduced to the island. They were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Baikie for several days and Mr. Lacon was greatly impressed with the surroundings, and decided to buy the Baikie farm. Several months later he returned on a duck hunting trip and visited the large swamp on the Kawamura's farm. This property was his ideal so he bought it and sold the Baikie place to Henry Bell-Irving of Vancouver.

His mother, Lady Lacon came out from Toronto to visit her son and spent several days at the Baikie home. There was quite a fall of snow on the ground at the time so Mr. Baikie hitched old "Nob" to the homemade sleigh to drive his guest over the island to catch the steamer. It was heavy going so Mr. Baikie was walking up the church hill to lessen the load when Nob stopped to rest. He started up with such a jerk he almost tumbled Lady Lacon off into the snow bank, much to Mr. Baikie's



dismay. But the visitor laughed and said that coming from Ontario, she was quite used to snowy winters.

Miss Hilda Slayter was a first class passenger on the ill-fated White Star Liner Titanic when it was struck by an iceberg and sank 500 miles south of Newfoundland on April 15, 1912. She was the daughter of a distinguished Halifax family and she had spent some time abroad studying voice and music and had been the guest of relatives in England while purchasing a beautiful trousseau. She was travelling to Vancouver to meet Reginald Lacon and be married.

In describing her experiences Miss Slayter said: "I was in my berth when the crash came. There was no great shock; just enough jar to arouse one and make one wonder what had occurred. I heard a lot of shuffling of feet on the decks but there seemed to be no excitement. Then we heard a voice shouting as if from a long way off. "All on deck and put on life belts!" "I dressed hurriedly but took enough time to put on heavy clothes. It was a good thing I did. Those of us with extra clothes shared with those who had not sufficient on to keep them from suffering.

"As I reached the deck the boats were putting off. Everything was orderly and discipline was being maintained. I cannot say too much in praise of the self control showed by the crew and passengers. The great broad deck seemed perfectly safe, much safer than the small boats.

"I was one of the last off the ship. We had assisted one another to put on the life belts. Then I was grabbed by a man who passed me along a row of men who were standing at the rail and was carried along the deck so rapidly that I nearly lost my footing.

"I was put into boat 13 just as it was being lowered. There were 65 persons in No. 13 and No. 14 was lowered immediately afterwards. It came down directly above us. We were so crowded that nobody could find the gear that releases the boat. But a sailor from above saw our predicament and cut the ropes just in time or we would certainly have been swamped.

"We had nobody to row except the cook's boys and although they didn't know anything about it, they worked manfully. We were clear of the ship about three quarters of an hour when she sank. She was aglow with lights right up to the last and was plainly visible. Almost immediately there came a muffled explosion and then a second. The sea was calm."

Miss Slayter distinguished herself by numerous acts of kindness and courage in the face of the terrible hardships to which the saved passengers were subjected while adrift in the lifeboats before the Carpathia came to their rescue. She sang to keep spirits up.

Mrs. Baikie and girls were at the wharf to welcome the lovely bride when she arrived on the Charmer. The Lacon homestead was seven miles distance from the wharf and the store but the young bride used to drive



Betty and Necie Dalziel in front of George Dalziel's home 1932.



Mr. and Mrs. Tom Piket.

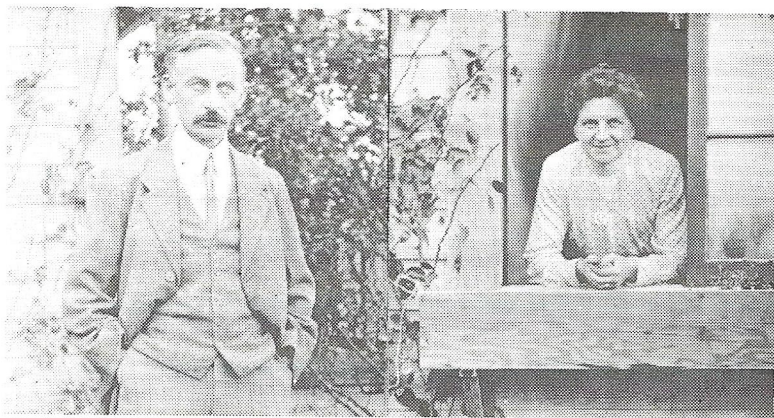


Howard McFarlan's home.



Reginald Lacon first home, 1916.





Mr. and Mrs. George Dalziel, 1914.



Mr. and Mrs. Rikichi Kawamura.  
1910.



Mr. and Mrs. James Corrigan.



Three old timers — William Baikie, Bob Swan, George McFarlan, 1928.

the horse and buggy in for mail and supplies. She tackled her household duties cheerfully and often laughed at her first attempts at baking.

The nearest neighbours were some four miles away and life was rather isolated for her as she loved to entertain and was a very gracious hostess. Her young son was born in 1913 so each Christmas she held a festive party for nearby mothers and children.

Hilda worked very hard for the Red Cross and organized concerts to raise money. She often sang but jokingly maintained her two top notes went down with the Titanic.

While Reggie was in the army she spent some years in England and while they were away they had a farm manager named Cody who together with his sister Miss Cody ran the place for several years. When the Lacons returned they found them gone and the place in disrepair.

Some years later they had the misfortune to lose their home by fire. They rebuilt on the same spot and 13 years later it was destroyed by fire. They lost everything but undaunted Hilda showed her courageous spirit and they built another home.

Mr. Lacon was active in the Rod and Gun Club and the Lawn Bowling Club. Mrs. Lacon took an active part in the Anglican Church and the Red Cross. She gave a graphic account of her lifetime dream -- her trip to Greece, Italy, Crete, Spain and the Azores when she spoke to the members of the Women's Institute, an organization she was keenly interested in as a long-time member.

The Lacons in later years lived quietly in their retirement and after Mr. Lacon passed away in 1960 Mrs. Lacon spent part of her time with her son and family on the Isle of Wight, and while on a trip to England she died around 1965 at the age of 85.

Their son Reginald was born in Vancouver and spent his early childhood at their Denman home. He and his mother spent some time in New York and England during World War I and when the family returned to Denman in 1922 he attended Shawnigan Boys' School. At the age of 12 he started his naval career at Dartmouth, England. He served on several destroyers and was Commander on HMS Zenith during World War II. He spent his holidays with his parents and after they passed away he continued to spend a great deal of his retirement at his old home.

Recently he sold part of the original estate. He travels a lot and when on Denman entertains his friends at hunting parties and bridge games. He is a member of the local branch 234 of the Royal Canadian Legion.



## The Bell-Irving Family

Henry Bell-Irving of Vancouver bought the Baikie place from H. R. Lacon and turned it over to his brother William and his son Angus who moved there in the fall of 1913. At Easter 1914, Mrs. William Bell-Irving and her four daughters, Heather, Nan, Ada, and Isa and son Mike arrived from England to take up residence. Mr. Bell-Irving returned to Cuba where he had interests in the sugar industry and died there several years later.

Mrs. Bell-Irving took a keen interest in community affairs and the young people were all sport minded and took an active part. Mrs. Bell-Irving and the girls were active members in the Women's Institute when it was organized. They also worked hard for the fall fairs and during World War I Ada ran the farm. Angus and Mike served in France and Nan returned to England where she became a nun. Isa married Fred Piercy and after the war Ada married Arthur Henley and they continued to farm. Heather married Cee Lacon. Angus married and built a home on part of the home property and Mike married and had a lovely home built on the former Conway place. A few years later Angus moved to Vancouver and Mike moved to Victoria.

In the early thirties the Henley family moved to Armstrong after selling the farm to H. Howe.

## The Dalziel Family

Mr. and Mrs. John Bannerman and family bought the Harry Beadnell (formerly McCutcheon) place. In 1905, two years later they moved to Hornby Island after selling out to Mr. and Mrs. George Dalziel and son Jim and daughter Muriel. The Dalziels had spent a few months at Comox after arriving from Scotland but shortly after they settled on Denman their home was destroyed by fire. A large two-storey home was built and was in use until 1962 when it was torn down.

George Dalziel had interests in the woollen mills at Peebles, Scotland and he soon had a flock of sheep along with a few head of cattle and poultry. He was very community minded and he organized the Farmers' Institute, serving as president and then as secretary for many years. He started the Boys' and Girls' Clubs and was responsible for starting the local fairs and serving on committees. He was secretary of the local school board and worked hard for the rural telephone company. The Women's Institute was organized through his interest. He was a director of the B.C. Sheep Breeders organization and for years was its field man at New Westminster. He also attended conferences at Kamloops.

His wife Janet was active in the Presbyterian church and the Ladies Aid. She taught Sunday School to the children in her neighbourhood and at Christmas held a party in her home where the children played games and enjoyed a festive banquet. After the birth of her son Inglis, she discontinued these activities. Miss Peggy Dalziel came from Scotland to visit her brother and family.

Janet Dalziel was very friendly and kind and was greatly missed when she passed away suddenly in March 1923.

George Dalziel visited his old home in Scotland and returned to live on Denman. He was keenly interested in bridge and enjoyed having neighbours in for a game, after which he served coffee and his own home-baked shortbread. He spent his later years in Victoria with his daughter and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Greg Thornbery and family. His son Inglis sold part of the property and the subdivision is known as Dalziel Beach. A granddaughter, Betty and her husband Walter Schmidt farm the original homestead. Bob Isbister bought 10 acres of the beach frontage.

George Dalziel passed away May 28, 1948.

## The Hastings Family

Donald Hastings was born in Derbyshire, England in 1876 and was of Scottish parentage. He was a graduate of law from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, and he lived for a time in Germany. He came to Canada in 1906 and worked on a large cattle ranch south of Maple Creek, Saskatchewan. His boss, Mr. Gaff worked with Buffalo Bill Cody in supplying the railroad with beef and buffalo meat. Donald homesteaded near Moose Jaw and broke a half section of land with oxen.

He came to Vancouver Island around 1912 and worked and fished around Cape Scott for a couple of years until World War I broke out; then he came south to enlist but, due to a heart ailment, he was unfit for military service. He eventually came to Fanny Bay to visit relatives. In 1919 he and his cousin Harold Hastings bought the Jack Scott property on Denman Island. They ran a few sheep and Harold did carpentry work and Donald spent the summers rowboat fishing around the south end of the island.

He had a beach cabin and he was a great favorite with the young boys who loved to visit him. One summer he built a double-ended rowboat which he named the "Edith A" and the young people attended the launching ceremony. Coming up from Whalebone Point in a strong southeast wind he rigged up a blanket for a sail which carried the boat along at a good speed but was hard to manage while landing and the boat was swept right up on the beach.

Harold married and moved out. Donald baked his special whole



wheat bread which along with his cold dip every morning, he claimed kept him hale and hearty. He had a rain barrel bath on his verandah and as the Isbister, Dalziel and Corrigall children walked to school past his home they would call "Ho, Ho," and Donald would answer them "Ho, Ho". Alan Corrigall and Peter Isbister were his frequent visitors and they had many a conference and were jokingly called the "Big Three." Donald had a habit of closing his eyes and blinking before he answered questions so they named him "Blinky". He also had a distinctive manner of walking with a bouncing step at a good clip.

Donald loved to play bridge and enjoyed many a game at Grandpa Dalziel's with Tom and Jack Isbister and at the weekly game with a group of neighbours.

A few spring salmon were around in late December so Donald decided to go fishing although a light fog kept him near the shore. Around noon he caught a seven pounder near Whalebone Point and a little later he caught a larger fish and by the time he had landed it he looked around to get his bearings and discovered he could not see shore. Donald was concerned as he was to act as master of ceremonies at a concert the following evening so he started to row and row as he was anxious to get home. The fog grew thicker and darkness fell and finally at 11:45 p.m. he bumped into another boat which was anchored at Goose Spit on Hornby Island.

With a light wind behind him he headed across the two miles to Isbister's beach. It was 8 a.m. when he reached shore towards the north end of Denman. He figured he had rowed half way to Texada and back during the foggy night and during that time he and his dog had eaten half of the salmon. He reached Jim Dalziel's place around 2 p.m. and was given a decent meal and word soon spread that Donald had arrived home. He had a sleep and went to the concert.

He sold his place to Ted and Rose Malcolmson and moved to a cabin near Fillongley beach. He was over 70 when he married Mrs. Gertrude Howe and shortly afterwards they moved to Royston. Later they moved to White Rock and after his wife passed away Donald returned to his beach cabin on Denman where he continued to fish and keep a little garden. He seldom missed his daily dip in the ocean.

He was well in his eighties when Walter and Betty Schmidt persuaded him to move to a small cabin near their home. He took the Schmidt children, Linda, Larry and Kenny and Dennis Dalziel, to a day at the World Fair at Seattle in 1958.

After a short illness he passed away at St. Joseph's Hospital, Comox, in August 1965. Uncle Donald as he was locally known had celebrated his 89th birthday on January 9, 1965. He was buried in the Denman Island cemetery.

Linda Schmidt while on a trip to England visited some of his relatives.

## The Herbert Family

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Herbert who were looking forward to retirement, sold their summer resort at Pine Lake, Alberta and bought the Wetmore place on Denman in May 1941. Jack who had been crippled from childhood was a very enterprising man and would tackle any job even to milking a cow and chopping wood with one hand. He drove a big old Frontenac car and they enjoyed visiting and making new friends.

His wife was born Amy Plaxton in Norfolk, England, in 1879 and attended private school in Thorsby College, a large stone building built in the 1400s by the monks. After the death of her mother she was kept busy looking after younger members of the family. At the age of 18 she went in training for the Victorian Order of Nurses and she was paid about \$12.00 a year and the nurses had all the cleaning and scrubbing to do.

After graduating, Amy worked for Lady Lindsey for some years. She was nursing in Italy when a disastrous earthquake hit Messina, Sicily. This catastrophe was one of the world's worst disasters. Amy, along with all the available nurses and doctors, travelled from Rome by boat to the Messina area. She stayed on after the rest left to help those who needed it until the emergency was entirely over. For her unfailing devotion to duty and humanity, she received a medal and citation from the Italian government, March 17, 1911.

Miss Plaxton came to Canada and took the four-month post-graduate course in Ottawa and was presented with her certificate by Lady Grey, the Governor General's wife. She worked as a midwife and poverty nurse in Nova Scotia among the haddock fishermen's families for two years. She often rowed her boat along this rugged shore while visiting the small communities. The people were very poor and religious and she served them simply but effectively with home remedies.

In 1914 Amy pursued her wish to go west and arrived at Calgary when the country was filled with unrest just as World War I broke out. She carried on with her profession and she visited many of her country patients riding a bicycle.

While holidaying with Nurse Thomas at Pine Lake she met Jack Herbert and they were married in 1916 and Amy became a capable partner in a home-type tourist business.

During the influenza epidemic in 1918 and 1919 she worked untiringly, often staying in a neighbour's home until someone was well enough to take charge. She had a wonderful sense of humour and her stories of her nursing days were vivid and fascinating.

She was very generous and when friends gave her produce or meat she always thought someone probably needed it more than she did and in a day or two a little gift would come in the mail. It was impossible to get ahead of her.



Shortly after they came to Denman Jack was helping the Isbister children pick up potatoes behind the digger. Kay Isbister was celebrating a birthday so they asked Jack what day was his birthday and he said February 29th. The date was marked on the calendar and the night of the 29th the Isbisters, and the Corrigalls arrived at the Herbert's singing "Happy Birthday" and bearing a big cake. Of course Amy knew nothing of this and was surprised and when she heard the story said "Humph! That's one time his lies caught up with him." His birthday was really in July.

Jack loved to play cribbage so everyone had a great evening. Jack and Amy loved a game of bridge with neighbours. Jack had quite a knack of dealing cards with his one hand.

Jack and Amy used to drive down to the beach for oysters. They went in swimming and wore large straw hats which amused the Isbister children who had never seen anyone go in swimming with a hat on.

Jack passed away November 16, 1955 at the age of 78. Amy continued to live in their home for 19 years where she did all domestic work, pumped and carried water and fetched wood for her stove. She walked out to the highway every day for her mail and maintained that being active was the most important part of living to a good old age.

Her eyesight was poor and she was getting deaf when she was persuaded to move to the Glacier View Home at Comox. She was there six months and passed away at St. Joseph's Hospital on March 7th, 1975 at the age of 96.

She was a grand old lady, fondly remembered by her many friends.

## *Here's to the Farmer*

To Sowers and Growers  
And Hoers and Mowers  
And all who may live by  
and love the Good Land,

To straight furrowed Plowman  
And sure fingered Cowmen

With strength in the sinew  
and skill in the hand,  
To Seeders and Weeders  
And pedigree Breeders  
Of vineries and pineries,  
Of the hen and the hive,  
To members and leaders  
And all of our readers  
We offer good wishes  
for Yule and the year.  
May labour be lighter  
And the future be brighter,  
For those and the families  
Who hold them so dear.

ECHO LIDSTER

Echo Lidster often visited Denman when she was Superintendent of the Boys' and Girls' clubs.



## Farming on Denman Island

The Denman Island Farmers' Institute was organized in June 1915 by George Dalziel and in June 1916 he started the Boys' and Girls' Clubs. The first fair was held September 23, 1916 and was sponsored by the Farmers' Institute as no grant was forthcoming from the government at that time. It was held in the old hall and was very successful. Classes included garden produce, fruit, cooking, and needlework, a junior section, school gardens, Boys' and Girls' potato and poultry clubs.

Government judges complimented the boys on their potato yield and Alex Chalmers sent his prize exhibit to the New Westminster fair where it won first prize. Muriel Dalziel won first prize with her pen of White Wyandottes.

In 1917 a government grant was procured and a larger fair was held in the Denman Athletic Club hall. It was very well patronized by visitors coming from Vancouver Island. The judges said that for a small community, it was outstanding in all classes. A fair book was published and everyone took a great interest in the yearly event until 1925 when farming tapered off and a number of participants moved from the island.

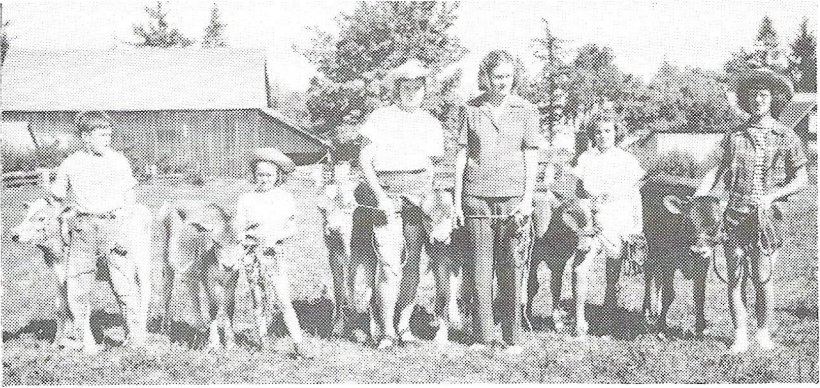
At the third annual fair the attendance was poor owing to the counter attraction of the Prince of Wales' visit to Courtenay but the fair itself was up to high standard and the exhibits in every class were of an exceptionally high grade. Mrs. F. Bonavia of Victoria, who judged the women's section at the 1922 fair, was particularly eulogistic of the merits of the exhibits in the children's classes. She said the canned fruit was beautiful and the cookies perfect and the sewing delighted the judge, being of a thoroughly practical nature. The workmanship in the women's needlework was exquisite.

The first prize butter was of a good colour and texture and of excellent flavour. Mr. Anketell-Jones judged the fruit and produce, commented on the good colouring and quality of the fruit and said the root crops were better than at the New Westminster fair. The corn was splendid and very uniform and the tomatoes were particularly strong.

A feature of the show was the cattle judging which was always keenly contested by both junior and senior classes. In the Boys' club the contest was very keen indeed. The judge found it very difficult to award the first prize but finally gave it to Tom Piercy, although Harper Baikie ran him very close.

During the depression years the Boys' and Girls' Clubs were disbanded. They were re-organized some ten years later by Tom Isbister. Field days were arranged and judges Sperry Phillips or Tom Stewart from the Department of Agriculture came to award the prizes. The Denman Island Calf Club entered the Comox District fair for a time and in 1948 Hazel Isbister won the cup for the best calf in both clubs and her father Tom

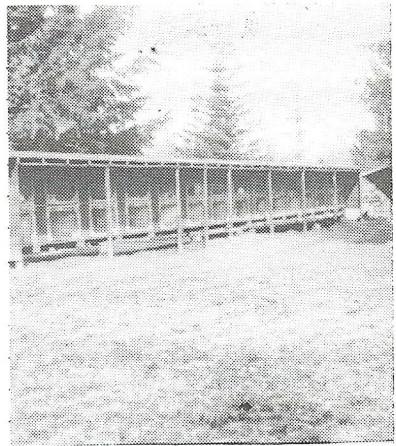




Calf Club Field Day at T. Isbister's. Tommy, Merlie and Helen Isbister, Rosemary Mitchell, Marilyn Schmidt and Marnie Isbister. 1948.



T. Isbister and heavy yield of Russell potatoes. Field corn in distance.



Inisfail Rabbitry owned by Mr. and Mrs. W. Wetmore.



Muriel Dalziel's canning exhibit at Denman Fair, 1920.





Silo filling at the Fulton farm. Jim Dalziel, Bert Fulton and Harvey Piercy..



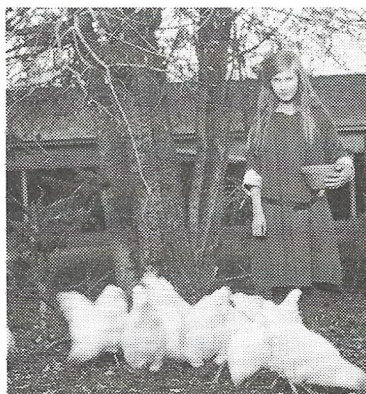
Abraham Pickle's barn, oldest barn still in use in 1975.



Tom Isbister with load of hay.



T. D. McLean's home.



Muriel Dalziel's prize winning pen of Wyandottes at Boy's and Girls' Club 1916.

Isbister, received a Leadership Award in recognition of nine years as Boys' and Girls' club leader. Several of the islands young people attended Youth Training courses at the University of British Columbia. Due to conditions of the times, the Boys' and Girls' clubs were later disbanded.

Feed, fertilizer, grain and grass seeds were bought through the Farmer's Institute in car lots. A government Jersey bull was loaned to the farmers and was kept in a strongly constructed pen at Howard McFarlan's farm. A powder magazine was built in the mountain side behind Sandy Swan's farm to store explosives. Scow loads of lime were also purchased for the farmers' use.

Dairy farming was at its peak during World War I and the average herd of Jerseys was around a dozen cows. Cow testing commenced in 1916 with G. H. Thornbery being the first tester. Herds were tested for tuberculosis and Bangs disease by government officials. The Farmers' Institute disbanded around 1960.

A condensory began operation at Courtenay in 1913 and the product was marketed under the "Pacific" name as well as "Buttercup" brand. In 1915 Denman farmers began shipping milk daily by a gas boat owned and operated by Bernard Meadows. Evaporated milk demanded quantity which Holsteins provided and, as most of the herds on Denman were Jerseys rich in butterfat, it was decided after several years to ship their cream twice a week to the Comox Creamery.

Later Sandy Swan with his boat, The Gooley, transported the cream cans and produce, as well as passengers and brought back feed and supplies. The trip up the Courtenay River depended on the tide, so he often left Denman at an early hour, arriving at Courtenay before anyone was around. He also made three trips weekly to Union Bay with the mail and passengers.

Jim Street was running the boat once when Sandy was away and on the return trip from Courtenay The Gooley started to take in water. Luckily it was a calm summer day and they were in sight of the Denman wharf.

Jim decided to lessen the load, so he headed in to Ormiston's beach, where the passengers were rowed ashore along with some of the freight. He was able to reach the wharf without mishap.

In 1928, Howard McFarlan and Jim Dalziel started the first bi-weekly cream truck service to Courtenay and then Bill Millard took over and operated for a number of years. In 1945, Marcus Isbister purchased a large truck and 1948 he hauled 15,000 Christmas trees and 100 tons of turnips and potatoes. Two carloads of Denman turnips and potatoes were shipped to Victoria through the Vancouver Island marketing board. Denman turnips were of an excellent quality.

Many of the Denman farmers were shareholders in the Comox Creamery, which was established in 1901, being one of the oldest co-operatives in British Columbia. Denman men serving as directors were



Gavin Russell, George Dalziel, Jack Isbister and Harve Piercy. In 1919 feed and machinery were also stocked.

The Courtenay Vegetable Cannery was opened at Courtenay on the Dyke Road in 1933 and Denman farmers contributed vegetables, fruit, pigs, beef and produce for the four years it was in operation. In 1929 there were around 1,000 sheep on the island.

Most of the farmers ran a few sheep, usually 20 or 30 ewes, and a number belonged to the British Columbia Sheep Breeders. George Dalziel, who was keenly interested, became a provincial grader of wool and spent several months each year at New Westminster. Jack Isbister was also a director for the Sheep Breeders Association. The wool was re-shipped to Ontario but due to the high freight rates, the farmers discontinued this practice and sold their wool to local buyers.

In the thirties, John Mosely was lucky in the fact that his 16 ewes raised 33 lambs; there was one set of triplets and the rest were twins. They ran on the roadside as there was no herd law at that time. Lambs often arrived before Christmas and lamb sold for a high price at Easter. Denman Island lamb is still in great demand.

Mr. and Mrs. John Kelsey arrived on Denman in 1919 and they bought the Charles Adey place, which originally belonged to Jimmy Graham. They started the first big poultry business and operated until 1943. Howard McFarlan sold eggs to the Egg Marketing board and in recent years Flem Tromp operated a progressive poultry business.

Turkeys were raised by S. Sorensen and Jerry Jerrard and Ernest Pickles has always raised geese and ducks. Most of the farmers could boost a hive of bees and Ada Bell-Irving and Harve Piercy had a number of hives as did E. Salvail in recent years.

Cone picking has been popular lately and brings in extra cash. Years ago boys used to cut and dry cascara bark for sale. In 1917 William Baikie cut and wrapped the first Christmas trees for sale and through the years thousands of trees have been shipped from Denman.

Truck gardening was carried on extensively by the three Kawamura brothers, who were wholesale dealers in farm produce. These Japanese bought the McDonald place around 1895 and with hired help they grew large quantities of produce in the big fertile swamp. They sold to retail stores in Cumberland and Union Bay. They also grew berries and fruit and raised poultry and had stock. Japanese miners at Cumberland were a ready market for their produce.

Mr. and Mrs. Rikichi Kawamura lived in a cabin by the beach road and remains of the orchard were there until recent years. The farm buildings were further south on higher ground, situated near a creek. Several Japanese families lived here. These people were very friendly and for a number of years they donated gifts for all the children on the island at Christmas. Some of the lovely trinket boxes and baskets are still around.

In 1910 the British Columbia Oil and Coal Company Limited bored with a diamond drill for coal on the Japanese property. Coal was found at a great depth so the operation was discarded.

The Japanese sold their farm to H. R. Lacon in 1911 and Mr. and Mrs. Kawamura, Mr. and Mrs. Kojiro Koto and their two small daughters moved to Saanichton, where they continued to farm. Shosuke Nakano became interested in real estate and took up residence in Victoria, after his bride arrived from Japan.

Around this period, Cumberland was a thriving coal town and had a population of some 2,000 Chinese in the largest Chinatown north of San Francisco. One Chinese named Kia Chung visited the Denman farms around Chinese New Year and bought up all the pigs and poultry he could obtain. He was very tall and for a time wore his hair in a queue. He always brought the lady of the house a small jar of preserved ginger and a bag of hard nuts and coloured Chinese candy for the youngsters.

During the depression when prices dropped to a low ebb, the farmers had a hard time to make ends meet. People on the farms had plenty to eat but cash was almost nil and they looked forward to the monthly .95c fliers from Woodward's where many items of clothing and groceries could be bought.

Horses were used for all farm work up until the late twenties. Tom Isbister was an expert ploughman and he used his team until around 1955. Howard McFarlan, Jim and Harve Piercy had a tractor to run their threshing machine. Washington Scott had one of the first tractors for farm use.

By the late 1960s most farmers had stopped shipping cream or whole milk and turned to beef stock. Stock dealers visited the island and bought cattle and sheep on the hoof. Many farmers did their own butchering.

In March 1961 a shipment of ten Welsh ponies, one of the largest herds in British Columbia and valued at thousands of dollars, was purchased by Ray and Sally Redfern. They travelled to Barrie, Ontario, to take ownership of the eight bred mares, one two-year-old filly and a golden palomino stallion, Llanarth Cracknell. Later a champion stallion, Seamair Royal Salute was bought in California. The Redferns ran a very progressive pony farm of registered Welsh mountain ponies. Sally had a thorough background in the art of horsemanship and was schooled in dressage and jumping. She competed in the zone finals of Olympic tryouts at the age of 16.

The Redferns won many prizes with their ponies at the Pacific National Exhibition, Victoria, Courtenay, Duncan and the mainland and the western American states. In 1964 they organized riding camps for boys and girls, aged eight to sixteen years. Counsellors supervised daily riding instructions, arts and crafts and many outdoor activities. The large farm house was ideal for dining and indoor recreation. The camp opened the first weekend in July and ran through to the middle of August. Boys





William Baikie's apple shed 1909.



Early lambs.



The Russell home, 1914. Theodore Nelson, Gavin and Maggie Russell.

and girls came from many parts of the province and the western American states to take the two-week course. The boys' campsite was situated near the beach and the girls' tents were by the house or up the back area. The camp operated for five years and then the Redferns sold the farm to Elizabeth Morgan and went to Victoria. Later they moved back to Santa Barbara, California.

Very few of the residents of the island are actually engaged in farming today. A number of the big farms have been subdivided but Gordon Wright, Cliff Martin and Walter Schmidt have large acreage and run beef cattle. Marcus Isbister, Walter Schmidt and the Orkney farm have flocks of sheep. Wes Piercy specializes in turnips, corn, potatoes and tomatoes. Farmers have been able to sell their surplus fruit and vegetables at the Farmer's Market Day around Labour Day, which is a recent popular event. Flem Tromp grew early vegetables for sale. Settlers on smaller places grow produce for their own use, and the occasional resident has a milk cow.

## Dairy Farming on Denman Island

By Tom Menzies

From the earliest settlement until recent years dairying has been a necessary part of Denman Island life. The first cattle imported were Durhams, commonly called Shorthorns. These cattle served a dual purpose in that they fleshed up easily for beef. In addition they were often extremely fine milkers. Their colour was predominately red with the odd strawberry roan and they were hardy.

With increasing demand for butter in Nanaimo and Cumberland it was practical to cross these cattle with Jersey bulls in order to upgrade the butterfat percentage.

By 1916 there were many fine herds of Jerseys on Denman. Owners included Alex McMillan, Harvey Piercy, Tom Chalmers, George Dalziel, Bert Fulton, Angus Bell-Irving, A. H. Swan, Irvine Piercy, McFarlan brothers, Pickles brothers, and later Jack Isbister.

With the establishing of Cow-testing Associations (now known as Dairy Herd Improvement Associations) throughout the dairying areas of the province a vast improvement of milk and butter production became evident in a stronger family farm economy.

A group of farmers would convene and form what was titled a Cow-testing Association, a board comprising a president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer, and six directors. The board would apply to provincial



Department of Agriculture for a supervisor (cowtester). The Comox Valley Cow-Testing Association had ten or twelve herds on Denman Island. Each month a list of the cows producing 50 pounds or more of butterfat was published by the Comox Argus newspaper, giving the name of each cow, her milk-production and butterfat production. At the end of each year the totals were compiled.

The duties of the cow-tester were to visit each farm around mid-afternoon one day a month, remain with the family overnight and move on or be moved to the next farm the following afternoon. He would have supper and at milking time would arrange individual milk sample bottles for each cow, list her name, weigh her production for the evening, place a small sample in her bottle and repeat the performance the following morning.

The hay, meal, silage, mangels, turnips were weighed and priced along with the value of pasture consumed. This constituted an approximate cost of production for the day, the month and the year. In the forenoon a few centimeters of each cow's milk were dropped into graduated test tubes and with the addition of sulphuric acid and hot water the centrifugal force obtained by whirling of the hand-operated Bapcock Tester resulted in a percentage reading of butterfat content of each animal. This was compiled for the month and year and was valued at the price being currently paid by the Comox Creamery Association.

These records were entered in each farmer's Test Book and the weeding out of the poorer producers and the use of herd sires from high-producing families of dairy cattle soon was evident as the heifers from the high-producing cows came into production. The farmer's income through cream production soon was evident along with the fact his stock was readily marketable to newcomers in dairy production.

Cream was transported up the Courtenay river by launch by native son "Sandy" Swan and later with the advent of the ferry, by William Millard of Denman Island, direct to the creamery.

Gregory H. Thornbery was the first cow-tester on Denman. His study of feeds, herd management, selection of herd sires, etc., made a notable contribution to the industry.

It should be mentioned that Alex McMillan's herd managed by Alfred Randall on what is Gordon Wright's farm, was one of Canada's outstanding grade Jersey herds.

The life of a cow-tester was unique among occupations. He would enjoy the meals of some 26 housewives and sleep in as many different beds each month -- hard beds, soft beds, wide beds, long beds and, in short, live in a "continual bed of roses". A week each month would be spent on Denman where he was an "adopted" member of each family and made cherished lifelong friendships.

It is sad to note that mass production and distribution have eliminated dairying and the wholesome dairying farm households. It is,

claimed that in British Columbia, where once there were over 3,000 dairy farms, there are now a mere 900 and that number is diminishing.

As a former cow-tester on Denman I can testify that the hospitality of those folk, now gone to their reward or enjoying the sunset of life, was of genuine quality in every phase.

## Denman Island Women's Institute

During the summer of 1919, Women's Institute work was talked of and interest stirred up by George Dalziel, secretary of the Farmers' Institute. The organization meeting was held at the time of the Denman Island fair on September 30th. The petition for a charter contained 30 names, and is dated October 31, 1919. Most of the women on the island attended the first meeting and the actual inauguration meeting was held on January 14, 1920. with Mrs. V. MacLachlan as guest speaker. Her choice of topic was an account of the Saanich Institute's progress and the Health Centre.

Early membership was fairly well upheld and this was a very active group from the beginning. Activities during the first year included obtaining the services of a travelling library, seeking improvement to the school basement floor, resulting in a cement floor being laid. Shipped four sacks of clothing to the Alberta relief fund; donations to the Red Cross; dressmaking classes; Christmas party complete with Santa, gifts, fruit and candy; school-closing picnic with sports. Subjects discussed included current affairs; marriage laws of Canada; pensions; child welfare and cleanliness in the school and the need for a visiting district nurse.

Talks or papers were given on buttermaking, spinning, wool carding, making of sweets, icings, how to make a mealie, education and better schools, agriculture in China, nursing in Mesopotamia, bee culture. A lecture and demonstration of poultry killing was given by Mr. Terry, from the Extension Department of Agriculture. Mr. White held classes on pruning fruit trees. Mrs. Bryant gave lessons in basketry weaving and Jesso clay modelling.

Mrs. Alice Mosely was the only member who had had any previous contact with Women's Institutes. She was the first president and was appointed a member of the Advisory Board in 1920, and was chosen delegate to represent the Denman Institute at several early conferences. She served as secretary-treasurer for many years. In recent years several of the members of the Denman Island Women's Institute have been elected as president or directors on the North Vancouver Island Women's Institute district board.

The Women's Institute worked in co-operation with the Farmers'



Institute in holding local fairs, the proceeds going towards Institute projects. A banquet was held to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Institute. For years Women's Institute pins were presented as honour gifts for perfect attendance. An organ was purchased for the use of the school in 1927. At various times school gardens were sponsored and other competitions, contests, and projects, including a Children's Fair and Baby Show. A First Aid kit was presented to the school, the playground was levelled and playground equipment, (swings, see-saw, horizontal bars) were installed.

A dental clinic was arranged before World War II and most of the children took advantage of it. Collections were taken and subscriptions given for a number of causes; local needy families; burned-out families; quilts were sent to England as well as to the Red Cross; bundles of clothing and collection of several hundred sand bags were hurriedly made and sent to the Fraser Valley flood relief.

Chief expenditures were annual subscription to the Queen Alexandra Solarium, Salvation Army, Crippled Children's Hospital and Central City Mission. During the war contributions were made to Russian relief, Greek relief, Chinese relief, Save the Children fund, National gift and food parcels to Women's Institutes in England. Subscriptions were sent to the Otho Scott, cancer and memorial funds.

During the war a Red Cross Home Nursing course was held; Mrs. H. Hastings, a retired nurse, gave instructions and classes were well attended. Mr. A. J. Taylor from Courtenay gave a series of St. John's Ambulance First Aid lectures at which a number of both men and women earned certificates. Jack Bradley, captain of the ferry boat at the time, continued attending classes until he held the rank of Instructor, and for a time he gave lessons. Dr. Meadows retired and moved away around 1926. The Women's Institute were instrumental in procuring another resident doctor, Dr. Mason and his wife, who served the island for several years. Monthly visits by a district nurse were eventually established.

A welcome home party and dance was arranged for returned boys and one girl. Each was presented with an engraved pencil.

Institute members have competed successfully at Vancouver, Victoria and the Comox district fairs.

They won outright (three times) a large silver trophy cup at the PNE while competing with Women's Institute through British Columbia. Collections of needlework included -- patchwork quilt, crochet, knitting, embroidery, tatting, sewing (machine and hand), thrift articles, rugs, wool-filled comforter, leather gloves, bobbin lace, handicrafts, pottery, ceramics, weaving and paintings. We also won a Bank cup outright at the Comox Agricultural Exhibition in 1930 for the best collective exhibit.

Each year since 1930 a wool-filled comforter is made and raffled along with other articles. This is our main fund-raising project at Christmas. A very successful handicraft show was sponsored. Flower shows,

bazaars, teas and sales of work have been featured during the years. In the 1958 Centennial we had an excellent antique display. Other activities:

Knitting and sewing garments for the Unitarian Service Committee, collecting Pennies for Friendship for the Associated Countrywomen of the World, the W.I. world organization. Used stamps and memorial cards and donations for the Solarium are continuing projects.

Hornby Island Women's Institute was cordially invited to a banquet and social to celebrate Denman's 21st anniversary and the Hornby members were co-hostesses at a district conference held at Denman in 1955.

A North Vancouver Island District conference was held at the Denman community hall in June 1940 with Mrs. H. McGreger, president of the Federated Institutes of Canada as guest speaker. Mrs. V. MacLachlan, provincial president, also attended. In 1955 the district conference was again held on Denman with Mrs. S. Gummow, superintendent of B.C. Women's Institutes and Mrs. Ada Shaw, provincial president, as honoured guests. Eight charter members attended and the president of the Denman Institute, Mrs. A.H. Swan, was presented with a Life Membership. The 50th anniversary of the Denman Institute was celebrated on April 10, 1969, in conjunction with the third conference held on the island. Mrs. J. Mertler, provincial president from Fort St. John was guest speaker.

In 1965 Denman W.I. won a \$20, 3rd prize at the PNE in the B.C. Tree Fruits canning competition and the following year received \$30 as 2nd prize. In September 1967, the 1st prize of \$50 and a large silver challenge trophy were won by Denman W.I.

The Institute took the initiative in getting a transportation system started and worked hard together with the Farmers' Institute in getting a rural daily mail delivery, better roads, hydro power, telephone toll system, rest rooms at the ferry landings, life belts for the ferry and garbage and anti-litter signs. They petitioned the government for better facilities at the camp area at Fillongley Park and requested a memorial plaque be placed by George Beadnell's grave to commemorate his generous gift of Fillongley Park.

During Centennial Year a local First Aid Post was established and a wheel chair was purchased and also a resuscitator. The Courtenay Volunteer Fire Brigade gave a demonstration of its use and also a lecture on First Aid. Crutches, First Aid equipment, and a cane were donated. Members assisted at the mobile T.B. testing van. A lovely lamp, featuring a hand-made polished driftwood base, was donated to St. Joseph's General Hospital at Comox when the new wing was opened.

New babies receive gifts and hospital patients are remembered. In recent years the Institute has treated the Pensioners to a picnic or dinner. Coloured slides of many parts of the world and local scenes have been shown as entertainment.



An Institute member, Mrs. Alice Griffen, donated a silver challenge cup to the school for the pupil making the best all-around progress during the year. The winner's name is engraved on a small silver shield and placed on the school shield. A small gift is given to the student.

Three charter members, Mrs. W. S. Swan, Mrs. J. Isbister and Mrs. E. Watson were presented with "Certificates of Merit" awards for 50 years of service. Mrs. Isbister wore a beautiful velvet gown, one hundred years old, during this Centennial celebration.

In recent years members have helped the community club at their oyster festival and farmers' market day. A large mirror and two big tables were donated to the hall. In 1974 Denman W.I. won 1st prize for the best display of handicrafts at the Home and Country Fair, which is North Vancouver Island district project. Denman's crocheted afghan was awarded 1st prize in the district competition.

The North Vancouver Island district conference was held April 10, 1975 in Courtenay. Mrs. Winnie Isbister, past president on the district board and president of the Denman Island Women's Institute was presented with a Life Membership pin.

## General Stores

The first Denman Island store was opened by Tom Pickard on Barcroft Flats and pioneers were able to buy supplies there for a few years.

Around 1890 William Cheney, an auctioneer, built a small store not far from the present store site between the properties owned in 1975 by Arthur Pickles and Mrs. J. Drinkwater.

The only remaining log house on Denman was built by James Graham around 1901. Later logs were boarded over and a kitchen was added. Mrs. Graham built a small store in the yard by the house and settlers on the east side of the island found it was more convenient to shop there than having to row to Union Bay for supplies.

Percy Smith, an engineer by trade, worked at the quarry operations for a time and then bought out the stock at the Graham store and built a much larger building on property he purchased from Robert Swan. This was an ideal spot where the roads from three directions met and for many years was fondly known as the "Corner" by the young people. Lumber was bought from the Graham mill and the main store had living quarters at the back. An outside stairway led to the four large bedrooms upstairs where some of the men working at the quarry roomed.

Percy married Lena Killian from North Dakota around 1911 and they ran the store for several years but they were not cut out to be storekeepers so they sold out to P. J. Doheny who had been working at Union Bay. The Smiths moved to the prairies. Pat, with his typical Irish

wit, was a born country storekeeper. He married Bessie Pickles in 1914 and together they ran the store and post office. Pat fired the locomotive for the Yapp Logging Company and later he worked for Dollars Logging Company at Deep Bay. Pat was around to haul the freight and do the heavier chores at his store. Pat stocked up with loggers supplies -- boots, gloves, socks, overalls and underwear and while Yapp's camp and the Henry Bay camp were in operation the loggers used to come to the store on Sunday morning and Pat did a thriving business. The men worked six days a week in those days. Whenever there was a dance or entertainment at the hall Pat's store was always open as long as anyone was around. He had many items of hardware and clothing as well as groceries and he ran a real old-time general store.

Bessie was very capable and she had hired help while her children Cyril, Amy and Francis were small. When Cyril was ready to enter high school the Dohenys sold the store and moved to Victoria where they continued to run a grocery business. Mrs. Wes Piercy had a small store in her home for a time.

Around 1925 Sandy Swan ran a butcher shop near his home when he owned the Grieder property. He bought from the farmers but lacking refrigeration, he had to be sure he could resell immediately after butchering. After a year he sold the building and it was moved from Grieders' corner to make an addition to the general store.

S. G. Ryall, who had a store at Quathiaski Cove and one at Bamfield bought the Doheny's store around 1930 and hired Mr. and Mrs. Stan Dean and their daughter Dorothy to run it. The Deans stayed for a few years and it was Stan who compiled the notes which William Baikie had collected for his history of Denman.

Mrs. Ryall and John and Olive lived for a time at the store after the Deans moved. Sid Ryall bought Mike Bell-Irving's attractive bungalow on the east side of the island where the family moved to. Mr. and Mrs. Ed Schmidt and Mr. and Mrs. O. Blackwood were store managers at different times.

Peggy and Ralph Aikens took over the business in 1945. Ralph's health was poor and grew gradually worse so they sold out in 1950 and moved back to Vancouver with their three small children. Ralph passed away not long after they left Denman.

Jim and Doras Kirk who had been with the Hudson's Bay fur trade in northern Canada took over the store in 1950. Very little improvement had been done to the living quarters other than the Aikens had installed hot and cold water. The Kirks put in a bathroom and made additional kitchen cupboards and a utility room and glassed in the back porch. In August 1957 Hydro power was brought to the island and electricity made a vast difference. A rural mail route was begun and the mail had to be picked up and dropped off at Buckley Bay daily. The store was one of the local Denman Island Telephone exchange stations and also the post of-



fice. Jim also issued fishing and hunting licences and fire permits and tide books. He volunteered daily reports for the meteorological station and during the late 50s he was in charge of a group of ground observers. The store sold newspapers and by now bread and milk and other perishables were transported in from Courtenay. The store was a very busy place and hired help was a necessity.

As new settlers built homes in this area the little settlement known as The Corner grew considerably. It was the general meeting place. Gas pumps were installed and refrigeration enabled ice cream bricks, meat and soft drinks to be sold.

The three Kirk boys were growing up and their mother, who loved nature, found time to go on camping and hiking trips with them to many parts of Vancouver Island.

Doras was very interested in pottery and gave lessons to a group. Both Jim and Doras were great collectors and built a museum and have many artifacts. Doras wrote many articles of interest for the Comox District Free Press and the Islander. She substituted at the school, taught Sunday school and was a keen photographer, showing many coloured slides of her various trips. Both Jim and Doras were great "rock hounds" and they made lovely lapidary objects and ceramics for sale.

Jim served as secretary on the Denman Island rural telephone company. He was obliging and found time to pass on messages and put up notices and was interested in the community and always made time to chat. He served as warden in the Anglican church and was an active member of the local Royal Canadian Legion Branch 234, and of the Denman Island Community Club.

Jim's eyes were giving him trouble and the doctors advised outdoor work so he decided to sell the business. He later worked on the ferry for many years.

The Kirks ran the store business for 16 years and in 1965 they sold to Stan and Marg Brown from Salmo, British Columbia. A coffee bar was installed and further refrigeration units were added. They opened the store for a few hours on Sundays to accommodate the many tourists and visitors coming to the island.

In 1969, the store changed hands again. Mr. and Mrs. Victor Crisp and Mr. and Mrs. Reg Magson from Kitimat took over. They made changes by adding a lunch counter and tables, remodelling the living quarters and the Post office and warehouse. For many years the building had been heated with wood stoves and then oil heaters and was often very cold.

A modern heating system was installed and the old country store became a modern general store.

With the influx of new settlers the proprietors found the business very time consuming and they sold out to Dan and June Lucas from Calgary who took over on November 1, 1974.

Mr. and Mrs. H. N. Tait who moved to Denman in 1974 and bought the Harold Piket property have built a small art shop where they sell Denman arts and crafts.

## Halls and Socials

In 1897 the young people built a community hall for the island, not far from the school. For many years this was the centre of the social life. Bob Grant of Union gave the lumber and William Keenan donated the land and William Baikie paid Keenan \$1 for the land in order to get the title of the property. J. Piket, George Beadnell and Baikie were the first trustees of the hall.

In 1894 a concert was held at the school to start a building fund and Mrs. H. Nixon raised money with socials to pay off the debt. The hall was around 60 feet long and 30 feet wide with a lean-to kitchen at the back. Meetings, socials, wedding receptions and the first fair, along with the usual dances were held there.

The highlight of the year was the school concert and the Christmas tree which stood in the corner by the small stage. Excited children stood in rapture gazing at the assortment of beautiful dolls, drums, trumpets, teddy bears and books and Noah's arks hung from the branches of the tree which was also decorated with strings of popcorn and coloured garlands.

Following Santa's visit and supper the babies and tots were put to sleep among the blankets and coats on the benches and everyone joined in the quadrilles, lancers, minuets, waltzes, two-steps and polkas as long as the fiddlers Percy Smith, Tom Graham or Willie Keenan were willing to play. These happy settlers collected their sleeping children and climbed into buggies or sleighs if there was snow on the ground and the horses took them home along the dark country roads.

Basket socials were popular and the ladies and girls placed their beautifully decorated baskets on the stage to be auctioned off. Competitive bidding among the youths often resulted in a young man having to pay a high price for his girl's basket. Dressing up for hard-times dances was also fun.

In 1912 when many new settlers arrived to work on the sandstone quarry and logging a large community hall was built near the store on the west side of the island. The shareholders formed the Denman Island Athletic Club. Harvey Piercy donated the property and shares were worked out in labour.

Many visitors from Fanny Bay and Union Bay came to the grand



opening. It was the best hall in the surrounding district and the floor proved the best north of Nanaimo and, until halls were built at Fanny Bay and Union Bay, it drew big crowds.

For many years Mrs. Abe McLauchlin of Fanny Bay played the piano for the dances which included all the old time favourites -- two-steps, three-steps and four-steps. Others were the barn dance, polkas, minuets, schottisches, lancers, one-steps, seven-steps and waltzes. John Doney used to call the dances and Charles Tweedie was an expert step dancer. Later when special events took place and an orchestra was hired from off the island, rag time and jazz was introduced and the Virginia reel, Gay Gordon, Highland Schottische and others were popular.

The residents on the east side of the island were not too happy when the new hall was built on the west side as they hated to see the old hall go but for a number of years both halls were used, the old hall serving as a centre for all general meetings. The first large community bridal shower held in July 1922 was one of the last social events held in the hall. Eventually it was dismantled.

Basketball was started in 1915 by Ed Dalby and remained popular for many years, with both boys' and girls' teams playing with district teams at Comox, Courtenay and Cumberland. Badminton was started in 1917 and has been enjoyed by young people and adults all through the years.

After World War I a number of families moved off the island, chiefly due to lack of employment, so in time the activity at the hall slackened. Hall managers up until this time were Tom Piket, Harvey Piercy, Irvine Piercy, Sandy Swan, W. S. Swan and John Corrigan. Their wives were usually in charge of refreshments.

The Denman Island Community Club was formed and bought out the shareholders in the Denman Island Athletic Club around the mid 40s. Gas lamps were replaced by several types of electric plants. The upstairs, dressing room and kitchen were remodelled and a badly needed fire escape was installed. The foundations were renewed and a new chimney was built and some of the windows were replaced. The hall was beginning to look pretty old but soon after the B.C. Hydro brought power to the island in 1957 the hall was wired for electricity.

In 1969 a very successful work bee was held at the community hall when Neil McKay and Marcus Isbister and helpers erected the rafters for the new kitchen and clubroom. Part of the old building was demolished. Neil completed the job and was complimented on the attractive clubroom which has been used frequently by the local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, the Women's Institute, Ratepayers, Community club for meetings. The modern kitchen and washrooms were a great improvement.

Five years ago a government grant was procured and a new floor was laid and an addition built on the south side of the building.

In late 1974 the Denman Island Community Club applied for an LIP grant to upgrade the community hall and build other facilities. A grant of \$18,300 was acquired and work commenced on January 6th, 1975. A total of 15 workers were employed. The main hall of the Community Building was completely relined, accoustical tile applied on the ceiling, a vallance installed on the stage and the stage relined and completely insulated.

A new enlarged porch was installed at the main entrance, now at the side of the building. An area for a tennis court was cleared and enclosed by a 50 foot by 120 foot concrete curb. An adjacent area was cleared of underbrush and an adventure playground laid out for children. Concrete pads were poured for four horseshoe pitches.

A B.C. Government Recreational grant was also obtained to modernize the electrical system, fence in the tennis court, buy new chairs for the hall and bring the furnace room up to fire standards. All projects were completed.

In 1975 the two side rooms completed under the LIP grant are now being furnished and equipped with recreational equipment for the Senior Citizens under a Federal grant from New Horizons.

The Denman Island Fire Protection group procured a 20-year lease on Crown land near the school and with a L.I.P. grant of \$22,500 are building a fire hall to house their two fire trucks. A health clinic room will serve as headquarters for the district health nurse and visiting doctors. The six men employed will complete the building by the end of April 1976. The first community hall was built in 1897 on this property.

## The Sandstone Quarry

Around 1907, Sam Dumaesq and Edward Tait from Vancouver visited Denman Island to investigate the possibility of starting a sandstone quarry on the mountain side year the main road crossing the island. On the advice of an expert stone mason, John Forrest from Scotland, they formed a Vancouver company for the development of the quarries and the claims were fully prospected. Soon equipment of the most modern machinery for the purpose was put in place. The company had its own wide gauge railroad to the water front, and its own wharfage facilities. The railroad was based on cement foundations part way up the hill and Japanese were employed to build the road bed which extended a half mile to the wharf where the blocks of sandstone were loaded on a scow. They bought 26 acres from R. Swan.

Workshops and power houses were built and the derrick with which the huge blocks of sandstone were handled was one of the largest in the



province. Muckers were employed to clear the trees and brush from the quarry and revealed that by some freak in nature the rock had been broken into natural blocks and, as if designed for just such a purpose, these were in the most convenient form and dimensions for modern building purposes at that time. Tony Tessaro and Tony Bottacella, experienced Italian powdermen drilled a series of holes with compressors. Powder was inserted in the holes and ignited thus blasting the sandstone into huge blocks.

The one flat car, attached to a steam donkey with a tight line, was loaded and travelled down the hill with its heavy load under its own momentum. The line was marked so that the donkey operator knew when to blow the whistle for the road crossing to warn any horse and buggy or pedestrian who happened along. The marked line also indicated when to brake and slow down so that the flat car would not gain too much speed going down the slope to the wharf.

Sam's brother, Arthur cut cord wood to fire the donkeys and this was loaded on the flat car for its return trip to the quarry. A crew of about 30 were employed and for a time a night shift was operated. A cookhouse was started for the convenience of men who did not have homes on Denman. Sam Dumaresq built a large house for his wife and four sons and two daughters who arrived from Vancouver.

Mr. and Mrs. Ed Tait and two sons lived in two large tents for a time until the quarry was in production and they moved back to Vancouver. Ed Tait had the first car on the island. The Dumaresq property is owned today by the Grieder family.

Frequent shipments of this building stone went to Vancouver. It was used in the building of Vancouver's old Normal School, part of Vancouver's old Post Office, the Royal Bank of Canada in Vancouver and part of Victoria High School and a number of other buildings.

A scow carried 200 tons of these blocks and once during a loading operation a scow tipped at the end of the dock and dumped the load into the channel. Another time a scow load was upset on its way to Vancouver. All hands were called to the wharf to put out a fire on one occasion.

The quarry thrived for six years but production dropped off when the sandstone in the buildings began to show signs of weathering. It was streaky and had a silty appearance when exposed to the air. Some thought the sandstone may have been cut in the wrong grain.

With the outbreak of World War I the quarry closed down. A number of families who had worked at this industry remained on the island, among them Mr. and Mrs. Jim Street and family, Mr. and Mrs. W. Boucher, Mr. and Mrs. Bert Fulton. The Savoie family and the DePape family moved to Hornby Island after a time.

For the next year Sam logged the timber from his property and then logged a claim above Beadnells. In 1916 he moved his logging operations to Toba Inlet on the mainland and moved his family there along with

William Wright (boom man) and family, J. McGee, B. Fulton and Tony Tessaro and their families.

In 1918 he moved his logging operations to the Queen Charlotte Islands to cut spruce which was greatly in demand for the building of airplanes. Sam's family and several other Denman men, namely Ray Chalmers and Francis Graham and his wife moved there. Following the war the Dumaresq family moved back to Vancouver. The company branched out and became a big outfit. It is still run by the Dumaresq brothers who operate camps in various places up the coast.

## Telegraph and Telephone Services

To alleviate some isolation problems, a petition was circulated among the islanders around 1907 requesting the government to provide telephones for communication in case of emergency. The B.C. Government Telegraph Company then installed a telephone at Wes Piercy's home near the wharf. This was known as North Denman (two long rings). Another telephone was installed at the east side of the island at Tom Chalmer's home, known as South Denman (three long rings). Two telephones were installed on Hornby Island and connected with the Government Telegraph Office at Union Bay. Mr. Fred Brown acted as agent and relayed telegrams to the islands and the agents on the islands delivered the messages. Mr. Brown was also postmaster at Union Bay and after post office hours the telephone system was disconnected until 9 a.m. Thus the islands were linked with civilization.

Dr. Meadows arrived on Denman Island in 1912 and settled near the wharf. Mr. James Ormiston, who was in poor health and suffered from asthma, had a private telephone installed. This connected up with the private telephone the Piercy brothers had installed between adjoining farms for their own convenience. The line was extended a short distance to the doctor's home and proved satisfactory.

A number of progressive farmers decided it was time they had a means of communication among themselves. A meeting was called at the home of Sandy Swan and a party-line system was set up. William Baikie and Howard McFarlan were instrumental in drawing up a set of bylaws while George Dalziel made a list of subscribers and worked out the party-line system.

Each share in the telephone system was \$61 and could be worked out in labour by digging holes, getting out poles and raising them and slashing the right-of-way. The telephone box cost \$25. Thirty phones were installed, which took in all parts of the island. Each household had its own ring, using combinations up to five rings. The courtesy, "Is the



'line busy?'" was strictly adhered to and another courtesy was to limit conversations. One long ring was used as an emergency call and was only used in case of a house fire or bush fire and on several occasions when a horse fell into a well.

One year people from all parts of the island were summoned by phone to a fire which destroyed Bill Millard's home in his absence. People working at Deep Bay spotted H. R. Lacon's home on fire at the south end of the island. They phoned the police at Courtenay who in turn phoned South Denman where Mrs. Tom Isbister, the sub-agent, rang the long ring. There was snow on the ground, but the islanders responded to the call and hastened the long distance to the Lacon home although they arrived too late to save anything.

The men of the island worked hard and under the leadership of Jack Scott, Harve Piercy and many others the system was in working order by the fall of 1919. Annual dues for the upkeep were around \$5 for many years. The annual meeting was held each spring and directors and linemen voted on and appointed. The system operated under congenial conditions for many years.

A limit of 30 phones on the line was rigidly enforced so as not to overload the line. Whenever a party sold his home, the phone was either sold with the house or else turned into the company to be voted on and the first name on the waiting list considered. During the years nearly all the telephones changed hands. Upkeep dues rose also.

This unique community-owned telephone system was the first one in the province and an example of tenacity and co-operation which has won the islanders a reputation, quoting William Baikie, that "When Denman Islanders want anything, they forget party politics, race, creed or anything else likely to mar any effort necessary to improve the condition of the island." Another instance which illustrates this spirit took place in 1927 when it proved necessary to have a connecting switch between the B.C. Telephone office in Courtenay and the Denman Island Rural line. Mr. A. Neil, M.P. helped to have this installed enabling a person to talk directly to Courtenay from his own home on Denman. Mrs. Tom Isbister acted as agent for 30 years. A similar switch was at the general store then operated by the Jim Kirks. Eventually the B.C. Telephone company bought out the Government line and North and South Denman stations were abandoned. For a time Denman was listed under Hornby Island where all the phones were renamed from Government stations to B.C. telephone numbers. The final annual meeting of the Denman Island Rural Telephone Association was held March 11, 1961.

A number of B.C. Telephones were installed and the Hornby-Denman exchange circuit one and two on Denman and circuits three and four on Hornby were connected to the B.C. Telephone Company's office at Courtenay. 1962 a two-circuit semi-automatic exchange station was placed on each island. Subscribers were given new rings. Each circuit ser-

ved subscribers on its own line but C  tral had to be called before other circuits were reached. The old telephone boxes were replaced by dial phones. On August 1966, Denman Islanders received free calling with Union Bay, Cumberland and Courtenay areas. The island was previously connected with Vancouver Island by long distance facilities and now has a local service based on the submarine across Baynes Sound and a telephone exchange at Union Bay.

Denman Island had the most unusual telephone system in British Columbia and was the only one wholly owned, operated and maintained by its subscribers. It served the islanders faithfully for 42 years.

## Electrical Power

Down through the years, Denman Islanders - particularly the womenfolk - have gained a reputation for their tenacity, ability to organize and knack of getting things done. The year 1938 could go down in the annals as one of great significance. The women took over! A few stalwarts of the islands' Women's Institute got together and - as invariably happens when women get bees in their bonnets -- the hive began to buzz and hum.

On this occasion they contacted members of the Farmers' Institute, who wholeheartedly supported them in circulating a petition to the provincial government in the hopes of getting electrical power installed on the islands.

Like the Suffragettes, the Women's Institute found it took a good deal longer than they anticipated to do, but the faith of this aspiring nucleus finally became justified.

No longer would they face the chore of polishing oil lamps, trimming wicks, fiddling with gas lamps, gas irons or temperamental gas-lighting plants or run-down batteries. "Let there be light!"

### FACTS ABOUT THE ELECTRIFICATION

The Commission spent \$130,000 to bring electrical services to Denman and Hornby. Experienced cablemen handled the submarine cable-laying job in September 1956. Two 5,666-foot underwater cables were laid from Vancouver Island to Denman; a single 6,500-foot submarine cable connected Denman to Hornby. Comox Valley district line crews, under distribution supervisor Bill McKee, built 34 miles of 6,900-12,000 volt distribution line on the two islands. The islanders themselves dug one-third of the pole holes and cleared right of ways.

Initially, 66 Denman Island and 34 Hornby Island homes received their first "charge!"

The electrification of the two islands was completed by the Power Commission and at a special ceremony on August 21, 1957, some 300 inhabitants of both islands were "well lit" for the first time in their lives.



The "power-on" ceremony was marked by a sumptuous banquet, catered to by the community club with the help of the ladies. The Power Commission kindly donated the turkeys and hams. This was essentially "Ladies' Day", and how the little ladies were lauded!

Marcus Isbister, Denman ratepayers' president, welcomed the visitors and residents and spoke of the "Faith of those few in 1938" and "the excellent work done by the Women's Institute in getting electrical power to the islands."

Visiting Commissioner H. J. MacLeod added his tribute to the ladies "the ones who stand to benefit most. They started it, and now they are entitled to reap a just reward."

Tom Farmer, Courtenay manager for the B.C. Power Commission, praised the wonderful co-operation the Commission had experienced during the construction project.

Dan Campbell, Comox MLA, who had resided on Denman for a short time and realized what a great day it was for the residents, rounded off the proceedings with more plaudits, finally pushing the button. "Turn on the lights" was the cry and as if by magic, coffee pots, TV sets, 'fridges and lighting systems hummed with Vancouver Island power, fulfilling those dreams of many years.

Mingling with the animated crowd, one could sense that this great boon of civilization, so often taken for granted, was here fully appreciated. Many door prizes were donated by Courtenay merchants. Gordon Bell supplied the old time and modern music for the dance.

## Fishing

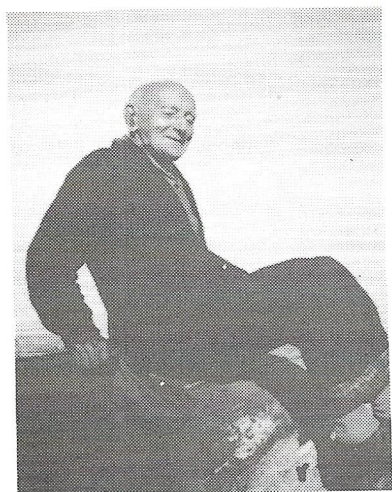
Before the advent of the gas boat, the fisherman had no trouble catching a salmon on the hand line. When a good run of fish was on, salmon were clearly seen swimming near the rowboat, especially around Shingle Spit and at Yellow Rock.

Salmon fishing has been a profitable industry through the years and the old cannery at Deep Bay was a ready market for the local catch. Cannery was opened in 1917.

In later years fish scows at Hornby wharf and Deep Bay collected the fish from the boats but today large packers deliver the catches to Vancouver.

The reduction plant at Deep Bay made fertilizer from dogfish and during World War II dogfish were caught commercially and processed for their oil. It burned down in 1931.

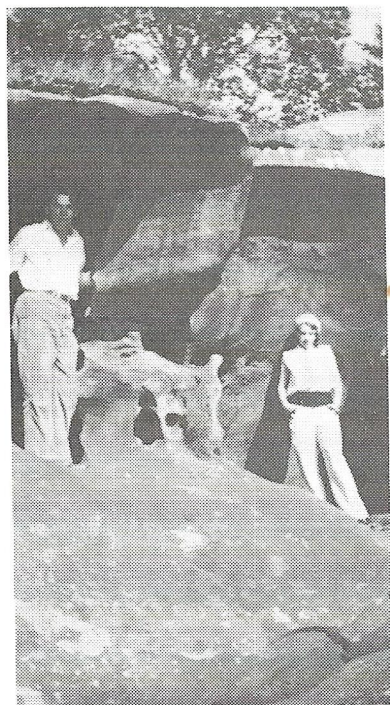
During the depression residents dug clams at Tree Island and at Beadnell's Spit to eke out their incomes. In 1946 total production of butter-clams from nearby Seal Island amounted to 196,072 pounds. The average catch per man-tide was 4,436 pounds.



Donald Hastings.



33 pound Spring Salmon caught by Tom Isbister.



Albert and Vera Graham of the Eddie Graham family standing by the entrance to Johnny Morrison's cave.

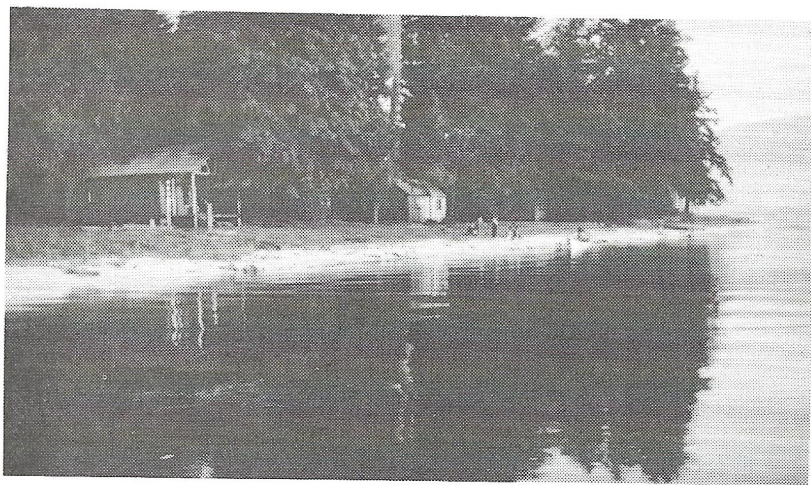


Herring fishing - Baynes Sound.



Scow load of clam shell.





Metcalfe Bay — Hadley's beach cabins.



Chickadee Lake.



T. Isbister home.



Jack Howe, Mrs. Howe, May Pickles,  
Gilbert Franklin. 1918.



Mr. and Mrs. Jack Herbert, 1942.

Ling cod, rock cod and red snappers have always been plentiful and odd flounder or sole are caught. Early settlers moulded small lead fish with hooks attached and with a hand line jigged for cod. Often fishermen cut their own spoons from sheets of copper or nickel.

It was Gordon Runkle who brought the first oyster seed from Japan and he seeded the beach in front of Komas Ranch at Henry Bay. Today oysters have spread to all the beaches around the island. Arthur Pickles built the first oyster shed and Al Scott and Walter Schmidt have modern shucking sheds. Ronnie Holst-Larsen shipped his packaged oysters by air to Norway for a time. Gordon Wright is an oyster farmer.

The Fisheries Department stocked Chickadee Lake and Graham Lake with trout and some fair-sized fish have been caught there.

From the early 1900s happy youngsters have waited each fall for the combination of full moon and high tide at the end of September when the smelt arrive on Beadnell's spit and the gravel beach at Dalziel's. Warmly clad and wearing gumboots they lugged lanterns and pails for scooping and pitchforks to spear the pursuing dogfish as the waves rolled the harvest of fish up onto the beach. The dogfish were heaved ashore too to be used later as fertilizer.

For a few years, when dogfish were caught commercially, the smelt did not come in. One young boy who had never seen the smelt arrive, was awakened early one morning from his bed on the front veranda by the sea gulls screaming on the beach. He ran down the hill to the beach and was amazed to see it covered with these little silver fish. He returned to the house and woke his little sister and with pails they filled their dad's rowboat full of smelt. They returned home so proud of their efforts but they did not realize the smelt would soon spoil. They brought a pail full home and in the rush to get ready for school they forgot to tell how many they had put in the rowboat. Several nights later when their Dad went down the hill to go fishing he found them and having to help clean and wash out the boat was a different story!

George Murray drilled test holes at low tide on the mud flats at Henry Bay in the early twenties. He found that under the surface clam-shell lay for an undetermined depth. He shipped the shell by scow to New Westminster for a time. The North West Clamshell Plant of New Westminster began operations in 1945 with Les Parsons and Bob Fulton coming from Kuper Island to run the plant at Henry Bay. George Cranage and other local men were employed. The shell was transported by donkey with a dragline and bucket to the machinery where it was crushed, washed and screened. The shell was used for poultry grit and the finer dust as agricultural lime and fertilizer. The output in 1949 was 3,000 tons shipped to the plant in New Westminster with an average of 250 tons to the scow load. The local plant closed down in the early 50s because oyster shell was plentiful and was cleaner.

The herring fleet spent two months in the locality in 1948 and this



became an annual event. It was quite a sight to see a dozen or more boats all lit up with fluorescent lights to attract the herring. This caused the fishery department to close Baynes Sound to fishing in order to prevent the depletion of the herring.\*

In 1972 the community club, now the Recreation Commission, sponsored the first oyster festival. It was held on the community hall grounds on Saturday of the long weekend in May and was such a success that each year since it has been enlarged and highly publicized.

May 18, 1974 was a hot sunny day and hundreds came to the event from Vancouver Island and the mainland. The ferry ran continuously and many left their cars at Buckley Bay and came on foot. People lined up at the refreshment stalls to sample the many varieties of oyster and sea food. Hand crafts were on display and outdoor entertainment and softball entertained the crowds until the big dance ended the day.

The highlight of the day was the "world" oyster shucking contest which was well run by the local committee. Each shucker who entered the contest took his place at a table and was given a pail of unopened oysters and used his own shucking knife. The art of shucking is in opening the shell quickly and removing the oyster without damaging it. Kenny Barkley of Union Bay was proclaimed the World Champion Shucker. He removed 52 oysters in five minutes but one point was deducted for each cut oyster and Kenny cut five, leaving him with a score of 47 whole oysters. Kenny won the trophy and received \$50 in cash and a fishing rod. His mother, Mrs. Barbara Barkley won in the ladies' class.

It was estimated, that 2,000 attended the festival in May 1975 despite the poor weather. Many left their cars at Buckley Bay and a bus took pedestrians from the Denman Island ferry to the community hall. Other new features were the Beer Garden and the hiring of musicians for the outdoor program. Ken Barkley retained his World Champion oyster shucking title for the third consecutive year. His brother Len ran him close with a score of 57.

The E. I. Piercy Memorial Trophy for horse-shoe pitching was donated by Wes Piercy in memory of his father, Irvine Piercy. Jerry Melisia of Ladysmith won the trophy.

Denman Island is the oyster capital with sixty per cent of all oysters in the province coming from Baynes Sound. 100,000 gallons were produced in 1975. Total sale value almost \$1.5 million.

\* Baynes Sound was opened again in 1975 for herring fishing.

## Logging

Shortly after the first settlers arrived on Denman, George Edwards and Joe Rodella hauled logs down Beadnell Creek with a team of oxen.

One of nature's resources was the large stand of timber on the island and because land had to be cleared, the settlers found it necessary as well as profitable to log their property. The timber was easily handled, being contiguous to the salt water, on sloping land, especially on the east side of the island.

The turn of the century saw much timber being logged with horses and an opportunity was afforded for many with the courage and a snug amount of savings to avail themselves of valuable tracts of timber lands, either to log or sell to the highest bidder. The rise in timber values made the people "wake up", with the result that logging operations not only paid a large cost of the expense of clearing farm lands but made a good living for those who were able to engage in the industry. Little expense was involved as farm horses were available.

Horace and Percy Smith logged the Swan and McCutcheon places north of Beadnell's, while William Baikie, Jack and Tom Chalmers and Howard Fairburn logged the Scott, Baikie and Chalmers holdings.

Skid roads were built by partly embedding small logs, some six feet long, in the earth and spacing them about four feet apart with pegs to brace them. A skid greaser usually a boy, carried a coal oil can filled with dogfish oil and swabbed the skids to enable the logs to run freely as the horses hauled them to the landing where they were pushed over the bank to the beach. The logs were then boomed in sections to await the arrival of a tug to tow the boom to Vancouver. Fraser Mills of New Westminster bought a lot of the logs. The east side of the island was exposed to storms so booming was only carried on during the summer months. Frequently booms were towed to Deep Bay for safety.

Some of the settlers were quite good at cruising timber and estimating the board feet content. Only the best trees were felled.

Iron-tipped four-foot-long spring boards were inserted in the two cuts chopped in the trunk of the tree, some five or six feet above the trunk root. A pair of fallers with a six-foot falling saw stood on the boards and sawed through the tree. Before these great giants of the forest crashed to the ground, the shout of "Timber!" alerted anyone in the area. A buckner then limbed the tree and sawed it into log length ready to be hauled to the skid road.

Robbie Scott and William Baikie felled a large fir tree on the McCutcheon place which was eight feet through on the stump. They had to notch in from each side in order to get their saws to reach across.

Around 1905, George Doane brought his outfit from the mainland



to log at Henry Bay. Frank Stewart was his teamster and he drove four teams of horses. Doane's young son Ralph, who was unable to swim was drowned near the Denman wharf. He was transporting boom-chains from a tug to the beach when his overloaded rowboat overturned and sank. Doane later logged the George McFarlan property, in from the cemetery, contracting it to the Grant brothers of Comox.

Howard McFarlan ran a camp at Henry Bay and he brought the first donkey engine to the island to yard the trees out from the woods. This did away with a lot of hard work but horses were used to haul the logs to the beach. He employed a dozen or more men, mostly from Denman. Men coming to the island to work in camps in this period were James McNaught, Jack McGee and Jack Wood who married Denman girls and then spent most of their lives on the island. Others were Nick Balo, Dave Lobsher, J. Lockerby, J. McKay and George Wood.

Around this time the Day brothers, Jim, Jack, Bill, Dan and Jabe, logged the timber in the Metcalfe Bay area. Mrs. Jim cooked for the outfit. One day she mistook a bottle of poison for her medicine bottle and, immediately realizing her mistake, she swallowed some lard. She was a tall, very heavy woman and her husband rowed her to Union Bay where she was taken to the Cumberland hospital. During this time she ate three pounds of lard which saved her life.

E. (Jack) Martin and his wife lived in a cabin above Beadnell's while he was logging. Sam Dumaresq logged in the same locality during 1915-1916.

Larger companies became interested in the island's first-growth fir and cedar, which was bringing a high price. The Squamish Logging Company of Vancouver began operations using Chinese to slash the right of way for a railway. Chester Yapp was foreman and the camp was located in the Beaver Pond area. The railroad ran three miles from past the Pickles farm, the school claim, over several trestles and out to Baikie's corner. It crossed the public road and proceeded through the Scott property to the wharf on Village Point, below the McMillan farm.

A built-over steam locomotive on standard gauge tracks was used, travelling at about 15 miles an hour and whistling loudly at the crossroads. On the return trip, as it hauled the flat cars up the slope at Baikie's corner, teenagers occasionally hitched a ride to visit friends at the Pickles farm. Years later part of this right of way was used as a connecting cross-road between the west and the Pickles road.

Jim and Wes Piercy, Jack Wood and Eddie Graham formed the Denman Island Logging Company, just after World War I ended. They were the first truck loggers on the island and they logged the Colleries timber on the land from the United Church to Ed Millards. One of the largest logs on Denman was cut on Ed Millard's property. The tree was felled by the Larsen brothers in 1920. It had 4320 board feet. These men logged the Madigan farm; they dammed the swamp and trucked the logs out.



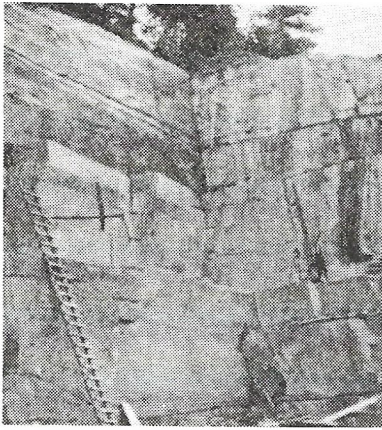


First Donkey Engine on Denman Island, 1906. It was owned by Howard McFarlan - the big fir log was one of the largest taken out of the woods. It produced 42,000 board feet of lumber. (*l-r*) *Back row:* on *big log* Stanley Percy, Alby Graham, Howard McFarlan, Mrs. Monty Wade (nee Vina Swan), Irene Graham, Mrs. Alby Graham (Minnie Swan) and Dorothy (babe in arms). Hood tender Swede Hanson with dog. *Front row:* Jimmie Graham, Jack Wood, Johnny McKenzie, Nick Baylaw, George Cliffe, George Wood. *Top of Donkey:* Joe Fitzgerald (boom man), Sandy Swan, MacDonald (bucker) and Frank Stewart (teamster).



*Bucker with saw:* McDonald, *Barker with axe:* Nick Baylo, *Fallers;* Sandy Swan and Jack Wood. Howard McFarlan's logging operation at Henry Bay, 1906.

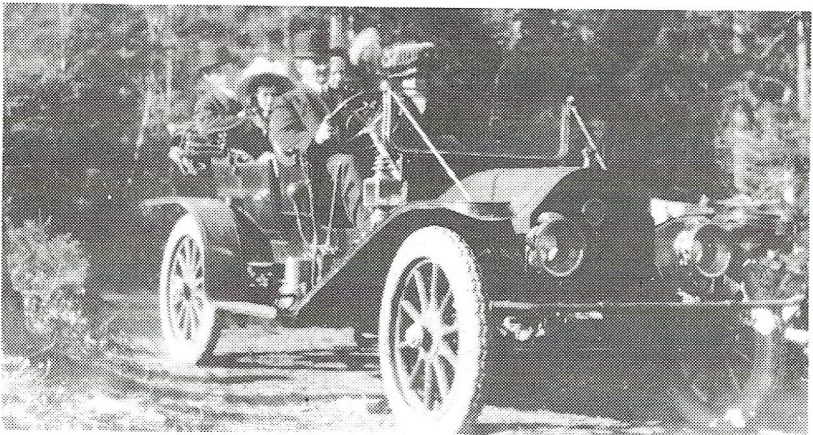




Sandstone Quarry on Denman Island.  
1912.



Sam Dumaesq home.



First car on Denman - 1910. *Front:* Mr. and Mrs. Ed Tait. *Rear:* Wes Piercy, Gladys Piercy, Alva Grieve and Mrs. W. Piercy.



John Forrest and Sam Dumaesq. 1908.

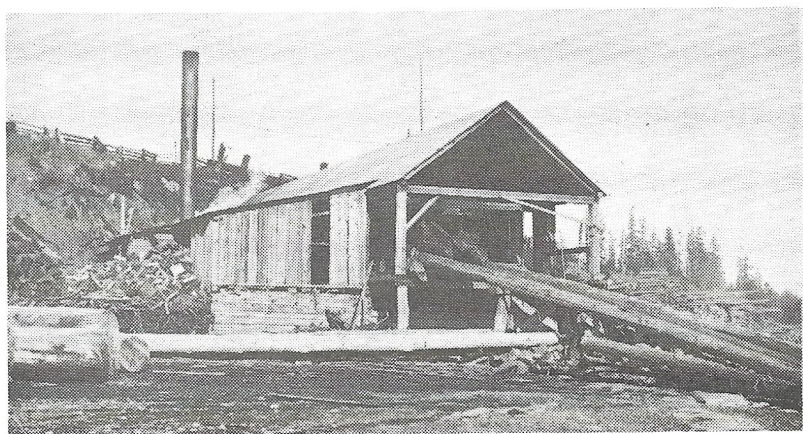




Frank Stewart with four teams of horses at Doane's Camp, Henry Bay.



Mr. and Mrs. Jack Scott at his boat building shed.



Graham Brothers sawmill near the wharf, 1910-1920.





William Baikie's home in 1917. T. Nelson cabin and orchard in foreground. Squamish logging railroad sign at cross roads.



This is Joe Fitzgerald, rolling the log off landing at Henry Bay on north end of Denman Island, 1909. Donated by J. H. Swan, Royston, B.C.



Bill Kelsey's mill.



Denman Island Logging Company was the first to haul logs by truck. Large log with 4,320 board feet from E. Millard's property in 1920.



Winnie Baikie; Ernest, Harry and May Pickles. 1919.



Miss Eileen Wright, junior teacher; Miss Anne Peck, senior teacher, Denman Island school, 1939.



The donkey pulled the logs along a pole road to the landing below the Piket farm. They also logged around Chickadee Lake.

Howard McFarlan and Eddie Graham took the timber off the McFarlan places. Logs were rolled over the landing in Lambert Channel in front of Howard's home. Jimmy Swan and his brother Frank while taking timber off their property felled one large tree which had 10,000 board feet. The lumber was used to build Jimmy's house which now belongs to Cliff Martin.

Bert Higgins logged the Francis Graham place and several small holdings. The Henry Bay Railroad Company logged between 40,000 and 50,000 acres of Canadian Colliers lands at the northern end of the island. Micky Foran and Dave Taylor of Vancouver managed the operation which began in 1925. Some 50 men were employed and most of them lived in the camp at Henry Bay, except for a few islanders who lived at home.

A "humdergen" railroad was operated for a time. Although rather obsolete, it worked well and hauled huge loads of logs. The humdergen had four wide concave wheels which ran along poles laid on either side of a twelve-foot -wide grade. The sets of wheels were held together by the weight of logs, while a caterpillar pulled the load to tidewater. A railroad and a wharf were built as logging moved inland and part of the Squamish grade was used with spurs branching out beyond Chickadee Lake, the Tweedie and Wilson claims and almost out to the Sand Bluffs on the east side of the island. Louie Tansky was the locomotive engineer. When logging was completed the outfit moved around December 1925 to Jackson Bay.

There were two small logging companies on the island in 1938, owned by the Baikie brothers and the Graham brothers. A pole camp was operated by McAllister in by the Swede's marsh in the northern end of the island. Russ and Andy Gibbs logged for several years at the south end. This area had been logged earlier by Patterson.

The timber around Graham Lake was logged by Max Baskin around 1948. Walter Tarnowski and Andy Flawse logged the Dickson timber once and, in the late sixties the area was cleaned up again by Dave Livingstone and Len Piket under the name of the Owl Lake Logging Company.

Second growth is coming into marketable size and a number of islanders have been cutting trees on their properties, namely Walter Schmidt, Wes Piercy, Bill Mee and Marcus Isbister. Small timber is used extensively for pulp. Jack Parnell logged recently near Gravelly Bay.

Viewing Denman from the island highway on Vancouver Island, the island appears to be still heavily timbered. An aerial view showed farms scattered among the trees. Early settlers who considered the best of the timber had been taken off years ago would be amazed at what is being logged today.

## Transportation

In the last century the little sidewheeler steamer Maude made fortnightly trips from Victoria to Nanaimo and on to Comox and settlers for Denman Island were rowed ashore or landed on a raft. The Caribou Fly and the Robert Dunsmuir called at the wharf which was built in 1886. The City of Nanaimo was on the run around the turn of the century and was followed by the Joan, the larger and faster of the two wooden steamers.

The Charmer came on the run before World War I and remained on until 1935. The Premier, later named the Charmer was completed in 1887 and her furnishings were described as "elegant". She was a plain, substantial little steamer, that gave good service to the coast for 48 years. At first she operated on the Puget Sound run from Vancouver to Tacoma on a bi-weekly schedule. Captain John Irving, head of the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company and the directors, were forced to put her under American registry and operate her with American crews, in order to comply with U.S. coastal laws.

The Premier had a very adventurous life; she was involved in the smallpox war, she collided with the steamer Queen in 1890, the barque Fristad in 1892 and the Tartar in 1907. The most serious accident was the collision with the steam collier Willamette on October 8, 1892 and this marked the end of her career under the American flag.

She was badly damaged and she was pushed by the Willamette to shore on the American side and beached in 24 feet of water. It was thought it was unlikely that the ship would be raised. Captain Irving under cover of darkness took a tug to the scene of the wreck with a gang of workmen, built a temporary bulkhead, pumped the vessel out, and towed her across the Strait of Juan de Fuca to safe haven in Canadian waters.

After a spell in Esquimalt dry dock she re-appeared in service under the new name of Charmer and during the rest of her life, the Charmer never ventured again across the American boundary.

In 1921 four Denman youths, Alex Chalmers, Tom Isbister, Bert and Abe Doney worked on the Charmer and at that time she called four times a week at Denman.

The last CPR boat on the run was the Princess Mary. She was an impressive sight as she steamed up Baynes Sound with all her flags flying on the day World War II ended. Young people loved to meet the boat and go aboard and buy ice cream cones as a special treat.

She was retired from the CPR fleet in 1948 and rests as a unique shore-based Princess Mary Restaurant Vessel on Harbour Road in Victoria.



A few years prior to World War I the Union Steamship Company ran a weekly boat up the coast and the Cowichan or the Chelohsin called at Denman on Sundays.

Many modes of transportation had served the islanders. Alby Graham had a steam tug boat which he used mostly to tow logs. Due to a growing demand for ferry service Alby bought another boat the Diane, built a raft and, on request carried cars, passengers and freight across to Buckley Bay. Landings were rough on both sides as the cars had to be driven over the beach and up planks onto the raft. He operated this service from 1923 until 1930. Once he had a near tragedy when a car with driver, a child and Mrs. Tom Piket somehow went completely overboard. The driver and child were rescued from the car. Mrs. Piket managed to crawl out of the window of the submerged car and reached the surface. She was unable to swim and clad in a large fur coat floated until she was safely picked up.

Traffic became heavier with some 60 cars on the island and the residents began to agitate for a regular daily ferry. After numerous meetings a petition was drawn up and signed by almost every resident. The Courtenay-Comox Board of Trade organized a visit to Denman in 1929 with the hope of developing more direct contract with the islanders both socially and in business. Arrangements somehow broke down and on arrival there was no one at the wharf to greet the party as had been planned. Calls to various homes soon brought Denman residents hurrying to meet their guests and an impromptu meeting was held with refreshments and a social gathering following. The Courtenay-Comox Board of Trade backed the petition and soon government men were sent to look over the situation and before long the ferry service was granted, subsidized by the government. Sandy Swan was awarded a contract by the Provincial Public Works Department to operate a ferry service between Denman Island and Buckley Bay on Vancouver Island. He had one scow built at Vancouver and a second one built by John W. Scott of Denman Island. Lashed to the 25 h.p. M.V. Garry Point II, the scow transported three vehicles per trip in 15 minutes across the mile-wide Baynes Sound. Dave Robertson was deckhand and Sandy owned and operated the ferry from August 1930 until August 1935. There were three scheduled trips daily and often specials.

The inauguration took place at the Denman ferry ramp where Dr. G. K. McNaughton MLA of Cumberland officiated. The ferry was christened by Thelma Swan, granddaughter of the pioneer Robert Swan. Denman Island hospitality proved equal to the occasion when about 100 Courtenay people accepted the invitation to visit the community. Over 150 sat down to a luncheon table laden with the good fare for which Denman is famous.

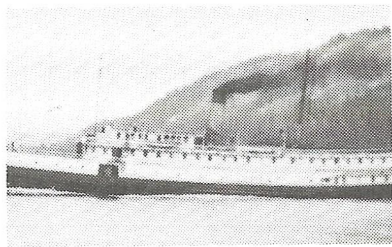
Jack Isbister presided and called upon William Baikie to do the honours for Denman. A pleasant afternoon was spent at Jimmy Aston's



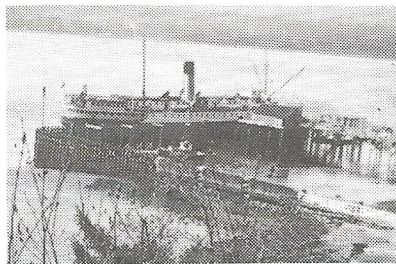
Waiting for the steamer to call. Mabel McMillan, Bob Swan, Flora Keenan, Jimmy Graham, George McFarlan, Tom Piercy, Mrs. W. Baikie and Winnie, Mrs. D. Pickles, W. Baikie and Wallace, and Irvine Piercy. Seated: Jimmy Piercy, Tom Chalmers, Mrs. Wes Piercy and Laura Keenan holding Gladys Piercy. Taken 1903.



Alex Chalmers, one of the Denman boys who worked on the Charmer.



S.S. CHARMER



The Princess Mary at Denman wharf.





Boat Day around 1911 showing the "waiting room."



Alby Graham's tug Rex with picnic party. 1910.





The Catherine Graham.  
1954.

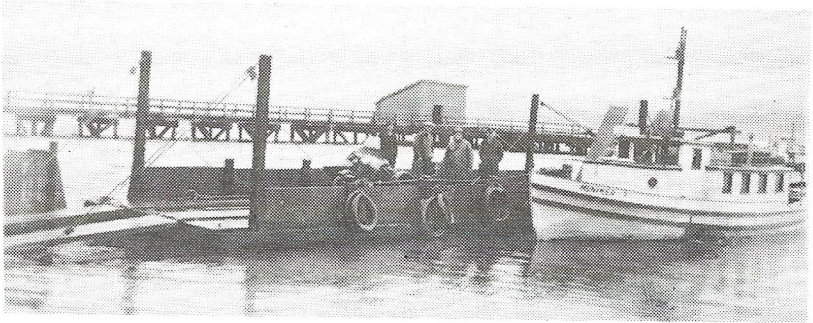


Inauguration of Denman Island ferry service, August 14, 1930, at Native Sons Hall.  
Courtenay.





The government ferry "Catherine Graham" was christened by Miss Catherine Graham who was born on the ferry boat "Moniker". Mrs. Sandy Swan, wife of first ferry operator and Catherine, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Graham. 1954.



The Moniker with car ferry. Arthur Pickles, Joe Griffen, William Baikie and Captain Jack Bradley. 1935.



The Baikie Brothers' boats, Billy B and John W. 1945.

place at Barcroft Flats. The islanders felt they had squared the debt shown them for the co-operation, and for hospitality such as that recently extended when Denman and Hornby people invaded Courtenay. It was a memorable and gala day for Denman.

In August 1935, the ferry contract was awarded to Baikie Brothers (Wallace, Harper and Jack), sons of William Baikie. They purchased the scows from Sandy and used the M.V. Moniker, rebuilt in Vancouver with a 30 h.p. Vivian diesel. Jack Bradley, formerly of Union Steamships, was employed as captain. An historical occasion occurred on January 15, 1937, when a tiny three-pound girl, Catherine Graham, was born in the midst of bitter cold and storm as the Moniker chugged between Denman and Buckley Bay. Mrs. Albert Graham's mother, Mrs. Tom Piket and Mrs. Sandy Swan were in attendance. Mrs. Swan took off some of her own warm clothing and wrapped the infant snugly as it was bitterly cold in the back seat of the old car.

The ferry has made many emergency trips in races with the stork.

In 1940 the Baikie Brothers ordered a larger boat. The M.V. Billy B., named after William Baikie was built in Vancouver shipyards and was powered with a 70 h.p. diesel. Insurance regulations required the passengers to transfer from their cars to the Billy B's cabin. The system was very awkward and hazardous especially in heavy seas. In 1953 there were six scheduled trips with 10 passengers on the boat and three cars on the scow. Very often there was as many as 12 round trips to cope with the traffic. During 1952 the ferry transported 8,400 cars and 21,335 passengers.

The Denman Island Ratepayers canvassed the island and a petition with 250 names asking for improved ferry service was submitted to the Public Works minister.

Captain Bradley had been skipper for the 18 years the Baikie Brothers owned and operated the ferry and he had missed very few trips and had never had an accident.

The provincial government soon had plans for an all steel double-end ferry designed to be very easy to manoeuvre, calling for decking for eight passenger cars, 46 passengers and two crew members. The ferry was named "Catherine Graham" in honour of the 17-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Graham who was born on the Moniker. Catherine swung a be-ribboned bottle of champagne against the 64-foot ultra-modern craft as she was launched into the water of Nanaimo harbour, powered by a 110 h.p. outboard.

Denman Islanders marked the 30th anniversary of the inauguration of the ferry service with a community supper held at the hall. Many guests of honour and former residents attended and during the entertainment period many stories and anecdotes were related by oldtimers. Mrs. Walter Millard and Mrs. Edward Millard made and decorated a per-



fect replica cake of the "Catherine Graham" which was cut by Mrs. Sandy Swan.

History was repeating itself. All the Hornby traffic came on the Catherine Graham and during the summer season with hundreds of tourists the ferry was running up to 22 trips instead of 16 round trips. The Department of Highways vessel "Georgella" and barge had been a regular reserve unit. Both vessels were on the run, giving half-hour service, a minimum total of 30 cars could be moved in an hour.

The Catherine Graham was wearing out and had frequent breakdowns and several times she drifted until help arrived. She had served faithfully for 18 years and had seldom missed a trip despite bad weather. School children catching scheduled buses at Buckley Bay occasionally had to be landed on the beach when the tide was too high during winter storms to land on the cement landing.

The new government ferry is designed to carry 22 cars, 150 passengers and a crew of four. The ferry landing built by Quadra Construction cost around \$1,000,000. Modern waiting rooms were erected at Buckley Bay and at the Denman side. The ferry has an inboard-outboard propeller at each end, each driven by a 295 h.p. engine which can drive the vessel at 11 knots. She was christened the "Denman Queen" which later was changed to "Klitsa".

She started the run April 1973 with 16 scheduled trips a day. Due to the very heavy traffic two additional trips were added in 1975. Her busiest day was during August 1975 when 678 cars with drivers and 1,101 passengers travelled across Baynes Sound.

## Sawmills

Around 1892 the McFarlan brothers had an overshot water wheel set up to power a small sawmill. In 1907 Tom and Bob Graham had a sawmill in by the Beaver Pond. Johnny Graham (no relation) was a partner and they sold out to Lawrence Buckley from Seattle around 1912. Johnny and family moved back to Victoria.

Johnny's brothers, Eddie and Alby, started a sawmill not far from the Denman wharf which was in operation until around 1920. Japanese help was employed along with several islanders. Alby did the towing with his tug, the "Rex". Tommy Scott who was engineer fell off a boom and drowned on March 3, 1914.

Sandy Swan had the first shingle mill on Denman. Eddie Graham ran a sawmill behind the Piket farm. The Millard brothers, Bill, Walter and Ed bought it in 1935 and set it up near the top of the mountain off Pickles Road. They sold out to Bill Kelsey in 1944 and Kelsey moved it to his property near the store. Later Ed Millard ran a sawmill at his home property.

Bill Mee operated a small sawmill on his property at the south end of the island. Marcus Isbister has a small mill and recently Ronnie Holst-Larsen has been cutting lumber with his portable equipment.

Jack Scott built scows for the ferry and the hull of the tug the 'J.W.' for the Baikie brothers in his boat shed.

## Denman Island Lace Club

Early in 1919, a Miss Elsie Spencer came out from England to visit her brother, Dave Spencer, a farmer here at the time. As she was an ardent bobbin lace maker, she brought her lace-making equipment with her. Miss Spencer had spent some time in Brussels, Belgium, where she had taken up lace-making as a hobby.

Miss Elsie Meadows, the local doctor's daughter, also from England, knew this art and, as both were interested, a lace class was organized at Miss Spencer's home. Eight ladies attended and completed the recommended 10 lessons. They were Mrs. Lizzie Piercy, Mrs. May Seip, Mrs. Mabel Randall, Mrs. Alma Christie, Mrs. Eunice Dalziel, Mrs. Maggie Graham, Mrs. Muriel Thornbery and Mrs. Rose Robertson. The last two were still around in 1975. Immediately after a second class was started with Mrs. Elsie Watson, Mrs. Ruby Millard, Mrs. Edith Rourke, Mrs. Gladys Street, Mrs. May McKay, and Mrs. Catherine Swan.

Miss Spencer also had a group of seven pupils at Union Bay. These lace makers made up the original lace club, which has continued without a break ever since, holding meetings in members' homes and later in halls.

The pillow on which the lace is made may be constructed on a round or bolster-shaped wood foundation which is covered with strong cotton material. It is tightly packed with fine straw or very fine excelsior over which a dark green cover is adjusted with a cord. Patterns are traced on oiled-linen and pinned on press board attached firmly to the pillow to hold the threads taut. Thread is wound on bobbins in pairs; it is held in place by long brass, rustless pins and weighted by beads and charms which help to prevent snarling.

Materials used such as linen thread, bone and wood bobbins, brass pins are imported from England and are identical with those used for generations in the lace-making centres of Buckinghamshire and Nottinghamshire in England.

The art of making pillow lace with bobbins of thread was introduced into England by the Huguenot refugees in the time of Queen Elizabeth I and was adopted by English craftsmen. Invention of machinery in the mid-nineteenth century caused decline of the handmade lace industry.



Machine-used lace was a poor quality and finish and handmade lace came to be highly prized and treasured. A revival in lace-making by hand resulted.

Intricate designs and patterns were handed down from mother to daughter. Learning to make lace takes time and patience. Many patterns are simple in design but the more difficult patterns may require as many as 700 bobbins to make the design. Simplest patterns require about 12 pair of bobbins.

Miss Spencer returned to her home at Morecambe, Yorkshire, England, after a short time but she left a lasting memory as a lace-maker.

Eventually a number of the original class members moved from Denman but they continued to make lace and they taught their friends the art which spread to other areas. Lace clubs were organized at Buckley Bay, Courtenay, Campbell River, Royston, Nanaimo, Duncan, Victoria and Vancouver. These clubs honoured Denman by keeping the original name as the Denman Island lace club was one of the first in Canada.

"As the sun colours flowers, so art colours life," and handmade lace is highly treasured and prized. Once learned the skill stays with the craftsman. Members have given many exhibitions and demonstrations and won numerous prizes at the Pacific National Exhibition and at the Victoria and Comox fairs. One fair judge said of them: "I have never seen a better display of handmade lace in the whole of Canada." Denman Island had the honour of organizing the first bobbin lace club. Daughters of the original lace-makers were taught the art at an early age.

The 50th anniversary of the Denman Island and District Lace Club was celebrated on June 10, 1969 at the Royston community hall and among the 65 guests present were four of the original class from Denman. Mrs. Gertie Swan, Nanoose Bay; Mrs. May McKy, Buckley Bay, Mrs. Elsie Watson, Denman Island, and Mrs. Rose Robertson, Victoria. While living in Buckley Bay Mrs. Robertson taught the art and the club was called the Rose Lace Club in her honour. Denman members carrying large white-wrapped bundles containing lace pillows and samples of work became a familiar sight on the Denman Island ferry when they travelled to visit neighbouring clubs.

Early club members were presented with a membership certificate, beautifully made with an intricate lace pattern on the border, the work of Miss Lydia Hinky, then a school teacher on Denman. In recent years the club has distinctive green, white and gold pins which members wear with pride.

Some years ago the club received a legacy of pillows, thread and bobbins from Miss N.E. Johnstone of Calgary. Miss Johnstone heard of the Denman and District Lace Club and in her will left her beloved pillow lace treasures to those who shared her skill in the art.

Now the clubs meet at Nanaimo for their annual reunion and luncheon and a great deal of reminiscing takes place.

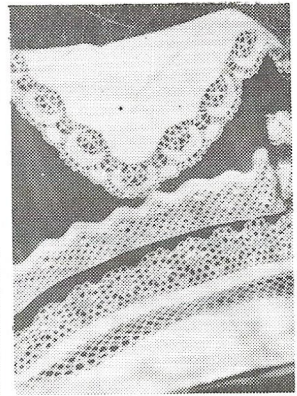


Denman Island General Store and Post Office, 1920.



Denman Island Lace Club 1920

*Back row:* Mabel McMillan, Muriel Dalziel, Eunice Baikie, Lizzie Piercy. *Front:* Alma Scott, Maggie Graham, May McFarlan, *child:* Jean Baikie.



Sample of bobbin lace.



Denman Island Women's Institute 1930. Maggie Graham, Iza Fulton, Gertie Swan, Vetra Millard, Eleanor Corrigan, Winnie Isbister, Hettie Wright, Mima Isbister, Caroline McFarlan, Lena Piercy, *Front:* Vi Millard, Kitty Swan and Elsie Watson and Victor Graham.





Enjoying a Sunday drive in 1918. Mr. and Mrs. W. Baikie, Jean, Rose Baikie, Edith Chalmers, Eva Scott, Winnie Baikie, Eunice Baikie and Jim Dalziel. Abe Doney, Alby Graham in front in second car. *Back:* Jack McGee, Caesar Scott, John Corrigan, Wallace Baikie.



Mr. and Mrs. William Baikie, 1926.



Tom Piercy ranch house.



## Lapidary

Mrs. J. Griffen had a lovely collection of agates which she had found in the beach gravel at Gravelly Bay near her home. Jim and Doras Kirk, were also interested in collecting agates and many coloured stones. They bought a tumbling barrel and soon had a large variety of polished stones. Doras fashioned pendants, earrings, and broaches for sale from agates and local dallasite. She sold them as souvenirs of Denman. They also collected many types of stones while on holiday trips and had them cut and polished and made up into jewellery. Bill Mee was also interested in this hobby.

Pottery making became popular around 1960 and a group of Denman ladies, Doras Kirk, Doris Boner, Erma Fitzpatrick and Rosemary Mitchell dug red clay from the flats near Metcalfe Bay. They experimented in the art and started the first pottery club. They have continued to improve their pottery and ceramics and their hobby has been quite profitable. They have entered many items of their handiwork in recent art and craft fairs. Doras Kirk instructed a class of beginners. Gene Isbister was also a keen potter and when Pat Lewis lived here she had her "mud hut" where she worked. The club travelled to Gabriola Island once to attend a workshop and were given lessons on the potters wheel.

Some of the newer settlers make professional pottery which is a stoneware. Manfred Ruff built a workshop and has a large wheel where he fashions a large variety of pottery articles. E. Mayers is another craftsman and lovely articles are sold at the Art shop recently opened by the Taits. Handmade jewellery, paintings, leatherwork, Tiffany glass and macrame are among the newer crafts, including furniture making and hat making.

Mrs. Joy Douglas creates beautiful seashell pictures and hand-painted wooden plaques. Mrs. Erma Fitzpatrick specializes in lovely dogwood pictures and vases and mugs.

Greenery and ferns were packed in a large shed near the wharf and shipped to florists shops in Vancouver and other points for a time. The Jack McGee family also picked salal and ferns for sale.

Myra Veness for years has had an interesting and profitable hobby fashioning beautifully polished pieces of driftwood into bases for lamps, clocks and wall plaques. She has spent many days searching for suitable pieces of beach wood, then cleaning and scraping rough edges and broken ends, sanding the surfaces and finally waxing and polishing. Myra is also very proud of her collection of bells which range from tiny crystal bells to large metal bells which she has collected locally. Friends have sent bells from many parts of the world. In 1975 she had over 400 bells.

When Mrs. Jean Haley moved from Vancouver to Denman around 1948 she was a member of the weavers' guild and she brought along her large loom and continued to do beautiful work. Mrs. Elyse Hadley and



Mrs. Winnie Russell are ardent weavers and do lovely pieces. Mrs. Erma Giffen brought her loom from Ottawa and makes wall hangings, place mats, ponchos and floor cushions as a pastime. She found materials much harder to come by in western Canada than in the east.

Dorothea Swan has had one of Denman's most interesting and flourishing "home industries," making clay beads for necklaces, earrings, and lapel pins. Commercial clay is purchased from Whale's Ltd., Victoria, and mixed with the red clay found on Denman. This mixture works very well with the large selection of glazes.

Each bead is rolled individually and while still wet a design is drawn on it and a hole made through it with a jeweller's file. When dry the beads are placed on sticks and painted with four to seven coats of glazes. Mrs. Swan uses every colour of the rainbow and cooks the beads in her kiln at 2,300 degrees for four or five hours. She grades the beads and 30 or 40 are then strung on a leather thong with a knot separating each bead. The necklace is finished off with a wild cherry toggle. Dorothea operates Mountain View resort, a rustic camp ground below Metcalfe Bay.

During the tourist season visitors are a ready market for her hand-made beads. During the winter months she is kept busy replenishing her supply.

## Junior and Senior Hobby Club

In 1953 Ralph Mayer organized a woodworking class for the local boys and girls. Meetings were held weekly on Saturday at the community hall and there was an average attendance of 15 in the junior class and 10 or more in the senior class. Ralph drew all the plans and taught them to measure and cut and assemble many simple and useful articles. He stressed the good rule to follow was the motto, "Let us think when we Build, That we build Forever," by John Ruskin.

Parents kindly served tea and several spoke on various subjects during the rest periods. Jim Kirk spoke on trappers methods in the north and early days in the Klondyke.

Tools were donated by MacMillan and Bloedel Logging Company and Ralph who does expert workmanship in wood, spoke of the beauty of cedar and the care and use of tools. Articles completed were sawhorses, work-benches, tool boxes, nail boxes, bench stops, bird houses, feeding tables, souvenir seeding boxes, drawing boards, kitchen step stools, chests and two older boys started a name sign. They carved "Denman Island" on the butt of a six-foot-long cedar log but it was left at the hall when the club disbanded when Ralph had to return to Vancouver due to ill health.

Tom Isbister took the name sign home and after cleaning and painting it had it erected at the ferry landing. Since that time it has been redone several times. The anchor from the "Alpha" was placed near-by for all visitors to view.

## Softball

Softball has always been popular with the young people and occasionally a team from Hornby would come to play at Isbisters' fields. Around 1948 the Denman Island softball club was formed and the team joined the Comox District softball league. A back stop was set up in the back field at Walter Schmidt's place and visiting teams came from Comox, Courtenay, Bevan, Merville, and Fanny Bay. Islanders and visitors enjoyed the games. When playing return league games the Denman team travelled in the back of Marcus Isbister's cream truck. Girl friends came to cheer and serve picnic lunches.

## Settlers Arriving on Denman

*from 1919 'til 1975*

A number of new settlers arrived after World War I among them were Mr. and Mrs. Jack Isbister from Orkney, Scotland, who bought the Jack Chalmers farm in 1919 and ran a very progressive dairy herd for many years. An addition was built on to the barn but it was destroyed by fire in 1929. A larger more modern barn replaced it and sheep sheds were built. Jack and his wife Mima were active in church affairs and served on the board. He was a director of the Sheep Breeders, the Comox Creamery, Farmers' Institute and the local school board. Mima was a charter member of the Denman Island Institute. She resided in the same house for 54 years. Both worked hard for the local fairs. Jack bought 23 acres from John Corrigan and also 80 acres known as the Washington Scott place. These properties adjoined his 58 acre home place of Bonny View.

Jack never recovered from a fall from a roof and passed away in 1959. Mima moved from the farm in 1973 when she entered Glacier View Home at Comox. She celebrated her 86th birthday on July 18, 1975 when she entertained her family at a luncheon in the Denman Island Hall. She celebrated her 80th birthday at her old family home "Aikerness", Orkney. Her son Marcus farmed the property until, several years ago, he sold the Corrigan portion and subdivided considerable acreage.

Mr. and Mrs. Percy Emerton and family and Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Phillips and son Jack were neighbours on Lacon Road, and Mr. and Mrs. John Kelsey and family, who bought the Adey place, and Dave Robertson and James Robertson and their families settled on what is now the Mitchell property all close by.

Bill Millard came from Saskatchewan around 1923 and he married Vetra Piercy and they settled in the centre of the island near the school. He moved the old Stewart house and built onto it and he also moved the



little red school from across the road. He used it as a workshop but it was destroyed by fire along with the house. He built a modern home and teachers boarded with them for a number of years. Bill ran the cream truck and then operated a sawmill with his brothers, Walter and Ed. Walter bought a portion of the McMillan farm and Ed bought the Keenan place and operated a sawmill. Donald and Harold Hastings bought the J. Scott place. Harold, a cabinet maker, married Agnes Failles and later moved to Union Bay. Mr. and Mrs. W. Chudy and family settled on the Tommy Lefley property. Mr. and Mrs. Joe Griffen bought the Jack Doney farm.

C.C. Lacon bought a large acreage of land near his brother Reginald's place. He married Heather Bell-Irving and after living there for some years they bought Kenny Sharp's beach place facing Union Bay. "Cee" was active in the Rod and Gun Club. Both were charter members of the Denman Island Lawn Bowling Club and he was warden in St. Saviour's Anglican Church.

Tommy Isbister moved to Denman in 1926 and bought part of the Nixon place which he later sold to Mr. and Mrs. Peter Hyatt. He then bought the Tom Chalmers dairy farm on the east side of the island and moved there in March 1930.

Reece bought the top end of the island after it had been logged off. He later sold to Gordon Runkle who named it Komas Ranch. The Runkle family came from Vancouver each summer to spend their holidays at their beautiful beach at Henry Bay. A number of families in turn resided there as farm managers -- Mr. and Mrs. Lorne Callahan, Mr. and Mrs. George Wells, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Peterson and family, Mr. and Mrs. Olaf Neros, Mr. and Mrs. C. Neilson and the Bormans.

Gordon Runkle passed away suddenly around 1942. Mrs. Runkle sold part of the place to Mr. and Mrs. Les Parsons who farmed it for a number of years. The family of two sons and three daughters all married and are widely scattered now but John, Peter, Pam, Penny and Priscilla and their families have had several reunions of recent years at the beach cottages at Komas Ranch. The Runkle family decided to buy the property back and the Parsons were living there as caretakers until 1976 when they moved into Arthur Pickles' home near the store when he entered Glacier View Home.

George Wells bought the Baikie's beach place and built on to the original cabin. George was road foreman for some time. They built a hard-surfaced tennis court which proved popular with the young people. Barbara and George were very interested in drama and organized a drama club and produced a yearly play. "Eliza comes to Stay" was well received at Hornby, Union Bay, Merville and Campbell River. The Wells sold to J. Handcock and moved to New Zealand.

Mr. and Mrs. Callahan bought the J. Doney place at Gravelly Bay.

This property has changed hands a number of times. The Fred Martins came here from the prairies and they sold to Alex Hunter who in turn sold to Ted and Gladys Hunter from North Vancouver. The Hunters sold to Mr. and Mrs. C. Thomson who dismantled the old house and built a modern home nearer to the beach and he moved the road further back.

Due to poor health the Thomsons moved back to North Vancouver. Jack Parnell who owned the place in 1974, logged the remaining timber and subdivided the beach frontage. Around 1937 Mr. and Mrs. J. Maxwell and family bought the Fulton farm and they in turn sold to Carl Neilson who operated a dairy farm until the late 60s. Mr. and Mrs. Ollie Drinkwater bought the Piket farm around 1946 and a year later Mr. and Mrs. J. Drinkwater and family arrived and bought the Alby Graham home near the store. Mrs. B. Wheeldon and family came from Penticton and settled on the Corrigan farm near the United Church. John VerWolfe bought from Mrs. Wheeldon and today Mr. and Mrs. J. Hayman have renovated the home improved the place and established a bird sanctuary.

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Hyatt arrived on Denman around 1934 and settled on the east side where they did a bit of farming on the Nixon place. The original Nixon house burned down while they were there and they built a smaller house and grew beautiful flowers.

Around 1939 Mr. and Mrs. Walter Haley of Vancouver bought part of the Griffen place and built an attractive Tudor-type home. This was later sold to Mr. and Mrs. John Lewis and family who eventually moved to Victoria. Later Mr. and Mrs. J. Harrison of Vancouver owned this house. Mr. and Mrs. John Corrigan and family moved to Courtenay in 1946.

Mr. and Mrs. Steve Veness and son Pat came to the island around 1946 and bought part of the Beadnell place.

Ernest Watson came to work at Miss E. McFarlan's farm around 1948 and he later married her and they operated a dairy and poultry business for some years. They sold the place to Mr. and Mrs. F. Lennard and their daughter Sally and her husband Ray Redfern took over the farm. The Watsons built a home on a reserved part. Later they sold and moved to Nanaimo. Mr. and Mrs. H. Wilkinson bought the place and in turn sold to Mr. and Mrs. V. Cirsp.

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Griffen left the island for a few years and when they returned they bought part of the Jim Piercy farm. When Joe passed away his wife sold to Mr. and Mrs. Jack McGee from Hornby Island. Their son Jim McGee and family lived on Denman for a few years.

Captain Jack Bradley and Mrs. Bradley built a home by the wharf hill. They moved it across to Buckley Bay after selling the land to Mr. and Mrs. W. Keep who built the house which he sold to Mr. and Mrs. Jim Calderwood who was captain on the ferry. Mr. and Mrs. H. Melville purchased it some years later and Mr. and Mrs. Peter Hind bought from them. Mrs. L. Moffit lived near by for several years.

Other houses in this area belong to Major and Mrs. F. Oatts, George



Walker, Mrs. F. Francis, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Hollick, Mr. and Mrs. A. Rist, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Brown and Mr. and Mrs. Scott. Mrs. B. Kelsey and Mr. and Mrs. E. Twyman resided here for a time.

Mr. and Mrs. J. Burrough arrived from Vancouver about 1945 and bought Mrs. A. Wood's property where they continued to live until 1973. Jack had travelled around the world on sailing ships and was an ardent reader. The travelling library was housed in their home for many years. "Bruff" passed away in 1974 at the age of 97. In 1946 Mr. and Mrs. William Mitchell and Rosemary bought the Dave Robertson place. For a few years they grew tulips but found the soil was not suitable, the heavy clay clung to the bulbs and when brushed off the brown skins also broke loose making the tulip bulbs unsaleable. "Mitch" farmed in a small way and worked out a lot at odd jobs and in his later years he was road foreman.

William Kelsey bought the Wes Piercy place and operated a sawmill. He had fished on the west coast for a time and then married Millie Hillis and returned to Denman where he logged. He built the house which he later sold to Mr. and Mrs. Alex Alliot and then built a large modern home near the store. Mr. and Mrs. Ben Hillis bought the Fred Piercy home in 1946 where they lived a retired life. In 1975 Mr. and Mrs. Jim Kirk owned this place.

Mr. and Mrs. William Stout and sons from Westray, Orkney, arrived for a few years stay on the island, residing first in the big house owned by the Grieder family, and then in the small house owned by Major Oatts. Stout worked on the ferry and he was an expert boat builder having built lifeboats in Orkney. He served many years as lightkeeper at Lennard Island on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

Mrs. Emma Hadley was born in 1881 at what became later the Dickson place. She and daughters Erma Giffen and Doris Livingstone lived at different times in the house which had been built by her brother, Jimmy Graham. This house was destroyed by fire in 1972 but George and Erma came to retire in 1973 and built a modern home there.

Ulrick and Christian Bergener and their sister Elsie bought the J. Kelsey farm in the early 1940s. They came from Switzerland and were hard working and kindly people who spent the rest of their lives on Denman. Ed and Marg Schmidt came from Saskatchewan around 1940. He worked for Sid Ryall at the store and post office and later at logging.

His brother Walter arrived and he married Betty Dalziel and they farmed the Dalziel place. Mr. and Mrs. J. Grieder and family came from Port Alberni and they bought from Mr. and Mrs. J. Vernon and family who had resided on Denman for a few years before moving to the Cariboo. Mr. and Mrs. Bill Wetmore bought the Angus Bell-Irving place which they sold in 1941 to Mr. and Mrs. Jack Herbert from Alberta. Ted and Rose Malcolmson spent several years on the Hastings place and around this time Dan and Ileen Illingsworth bought the Mosely property

where they lived for a time and then returned to the mainland.

Mr. and Mrs. C. N. Evans built a home near the Bergeners on the Lacon road. He then purchased the Jimmy Aston property at Barcroft Flats and subdivided it into 21 strips. These all bordered on the lovely Metcalfe Bay beach and were sold to a lot of new settlers. Mr. and Mrs. C. Hadley have a choice spot on the Bay and soon built a number of rustic tourist cabins. Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Burt and family resided here for a time and Gordon built a number of boats. Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Mayer, Mr. and Mrs. E. Kent and family, Mr. and Mrs. Tom O'Hagen, Mr. and Mrs. P. Marshall, Mr. and Mrs. A. Gracie and Mr. and Mrs. C. Coull, and Mr. and Mrs. Russ Boner were the first to build homes. The Boners spend six months in Santa Barbara, California each winter. Some of these places have changed hands and Dr. Ross Rose and Mrs. Rose moved to Victoria. Mr. and Mrs. W. Fitzpatrick bought from the Keeps and Mr. and Mrs. J. Tuck, Mr. and Mrs. L. Douglas, J. Stewart, Mr. and Mrs. Wellwood and Dr. and Mrs. D. Vey have homes here.

Mr. and Mrs. Louis Seebawn built the home Mrs. D. Swan resides in and he later bought a small piece of land and built near the store. Louis was mailman for a number of years and then sold to Mr. and Mrs. Bob Carr who in turn sold to Mr. and Mrs. C. Morey.

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Graham bought the Piket place from O. Drinkwater and Fred ran the school bus for a time. The Francis Graham place was taken over by Mr. and Mrs. W. DeYoung who ran a dairy farm. Mrs. De Young still resides on the place and rents to Cliff Martin. Mr. and Mrs. Bill Mee and family settled at the south end of the island and took over the beach cabins and property from Jim and Harve Piercy at Grassy Point. Bill logged his property and has a small sawmill. Mr. and Mrs. A. Jerrard bought a strip of land next to the creek from S. Ryall in 1949. This had been the original Washington Scott place and the Jerrards built an addition to the house and beautified the surroundings.

William Wilson bought the old T. Nelson home and he did a lot of whitewashing and gardening and he had it looking like a little bit of Ireland. Mr. and Mrs. Les Dean bought several beach lots from Ned McFarlan and built an attractive beach home. They later moved to Sidney and Mr. and Mrs. Ken Malthouse acquired the property. Mr. and Mrs. Harvey McIntyre and family came from Saskatchewan in 1949 and they bought the R. H. Howe farm. The original house which William Baikie had built here had been destroyed by fire several years before, when Bill Malcolm owned the place.

Flem Tromp lived on the Hastings place for several years and then he bought part of the "Sinky " Swan property and went into the poultry business. He also sold garden produce. In 1974 Flem and Bea sold to Mr. and Mrs. Reg Magson. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Duxbury bought the C. Evans home but eventually moved to Courtenay. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Cramer from Fort St. John bought the S. Ryall home on the east side where they



lived for several years before moving to Victoria. Shortly after the McKean moved into this house it was destroyed by fire.

In the late 60s Mr. and Mrs. Ed Westwood and Mr. and Mrs. Harold Walton of Hornby Island bought part of the G. Russell place. The Gallick family built here also. Mr. and Mrs. Bert Smith bought the Alliot place and Bert's brother Reg and Gladys Smith built a small house near the store. The Lohills and Combests were residents for several years.

Mr. and Mrs. Neil McKay bought the Harry Pickles farm at Chickadee Lake around 1960. He built a new home as Harry's cabin burnt down while Walter and Gwen Uchachuck were living there. Neil farmed and logged and later sold the place to a party of newcomers who built homes, took up farming and handicrafts and injected a complete new element into the staid old country life.

Mr. and Mrs. N. Harrington and family bought the "Cee" Lacon property. Mr. and Mrs. R. Holst-Larsen and family moved here from Duncan with the Bert Smiths. Mr. and Mrs. Johnny Johnson and family came here from Brentwood and built a new home. Johnny works on the ferry. The Harvey Strachans moved over from Hornby to live on part of the Dalziel farm. Walter Schmidt also purchased the Ernest Pickles farm.

Many other people including ferry captains Ivan Olson and family, Roy Johnson and family, Harold Piket and family lived here while employed. Mr. and Mrs. Pat Veness and sons moved to Denman.

Mr. and Mrs. George Ruddick built at Whalebone Point beach. The Phil Moore family of Chilliwack, the Clode family of Cowichan Lake and the Howard Kelsey family all have summer cabins on the former Watson place. Mr. and Mrs. J. McLeod and Mr. and Mrs. Kyer have places near the school. Mr. and Mrs. Ted Rolph, Mr. and Mrs. L. Donaldson, Mr. and Mrs. C. Croft and Dr. T. Truman have new homes on Lacon road. Mr. and Mrs. E. Kennedy and Mr. and Mrs. C. Green bought part of the Jerrard property. Mr. and Mrs. J. Rae and Mr. and Mrs. Cliff Grieve are among the new residents building on the McFarlan subdivision. Mr. and Mrs. Sid Clark and Mr. and Mrs. Jock Elliot have built new homes on the "Orkney Farm" which they bought from Tom Isbister in 1973. Dr. Boothroyd and his wife Dr. Margo Boothroyd and family all from Vancouver hope to retire on the farm eventually.

In the last year many new settlers have arrived and bought property. There are still a few living on Denman who were born on the island. Their ancestors would marvel at the progress of a prosperous, well-established community. Thus -- one may anticipate that when the roll call of province builders comes to be answered there will be found in the list of names many who pioneered this island and made it what it is.

"I toiled through calm and storm for many a year

While yet the untrodden forest slumbered here,

Of Progress, Faith, and Peace,

The Pioneer."

## Centennial Year

A British Columbia Centennial committee was formed in 1967 for the purpose of applying for a centennial grant to further community hall construction. Elected were chairman S. Veness and committee members R. Holst-Larsen and Mrs. T. Isbister. Wes Piercy represented the Community Club, Jim Kirk the Ratepayers, Marcus Isbister the Legion and Mrs. S. Veness the Women's Institute. Work bees were arranged to establish the playground. Mr. and Mrs. Veness attended the Centennial Ball held at Government House.

Harvey Piercy had donated the property for the hall and his son Archie presented the community club with a plaque in memory of his father who was the first white boy born on Denman. The playground is known as the Harvey Piercy Park.

A Centennial supper followed by a social evening and entertainment was held to honour four pioneers namely, Mrs. Alice Griffen, Mrs. Louisa Moffit, Mrs. Hettie Wright and Irvine Piercy. Medallions were presented by Archie Piercy who read a brief biography of each recipient. Also seated at the head table were those who had lived on Denman for 50 years. Mrs. T. Isbister read an interesting history of the island and its pioneers. Wes Piercy showed the CBC film "Life and the Land" of the Tom Piercy ranch which was shown on the network across Canada.

A very successful antique show was sponsored by the committee. Many residents gathered at the Denman wharf to view and board the SS Beaver on her official centennial visit.

July 28, 1971, was a happy and memorable occasion when Centennial medallions were presented to pioneers at the fifth annual pensioners' dinner sponsored by the Denman Island Women's Institute. More than 45 guests attended including special guests Major-General G.P. Pearkes and Mrs. Pearkes. Seated at the head table were Mrs. A. Griffen, Mrs. J. McGee, Arthur Pickles, Major-General Pearkes and Mrs. Pearkes, Major Oatts, W. Millard, Mrs. J. Isbister and Mrs. T. Isbister.

Major-General Pearkes presented pioneer medallions (for those born in Canada prior to 1896) to Mrs. Griffen and William Millard. Other recipients not present were Mr. and Mrs. C. Hadley and Mrs. W. Wright. Pioneer medallions with dogwood clasp (for those born in B.C. prior to 1896) were awarded to Arthur Pickles and his sister Mrs. Maud McGee. Both were born on Denman Island.

Other recipients not present were Mrs. A. Jerrard and Jack Frumento.

The SS Beaver arrived at Denman Island wharf on July 12, 1971 on an official visit during Centennial year. Many took the opportunity to go aboard. The crew was challenged to a game of softball and invited to take part in a pot-luck supper at the community hall. During the amateur hour a three-act melodrama called "Pumpernickle Affair," produced and written by a group of local young people was performed at the hall.





Guides and Brownies. *Back row:* Lillian Petersen, Zeta Piercy, Betty Dalziel, Necie Dalziel, Beth Isbister. *Front:* Ruth Corrigan, Ida Robertson, Kay Isbister, Ellnetta Millard, Jean Isbister, Elf-Helen Isbister. 1940.



Mrs. T. Isbister, president of W.I. presenting 50-year merit award to Mrs. Jack Isbister.



Mrs. A. Griffen cutting the Centennial cake. 1971.



Players Club 1916. Ray Chalmers, Ada, Heather and Isa Bell-Irving and Lilian Hood.



Pensioner's Centennial Luncheon. General Pearkes, Mrs. T. Isbister, Arthur Pickles and Mrs. J. McGee.



Ladies who celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversaries.  
Mrs. E. Graham,  
Mrs. J. Scott, Mrs. D. Phillips,  
Mrs. Wes Piercy, and Mrs. Ben Hillis.  
Photo 1952.





Mr. and Mrs. Edward Graham,  
December 7, 1903.



Mr. and Mrs. Edward Graham at their Diamond Wedding, 1963.



## Golden Wedding Anniversaries of Pioneers

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Swan celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in 1924. They were married in New Brunswick and came to Denman Island in 1878 where they spent the rest of their lives. Mr. and Mrs. James Corrigan celebrated their golden wedding September 19, 1933.

Former residents and friends attended the celebrations held at the community hall to honour Mr. and Mrs. Jack Scott in May 1949. Jack and Mary were married on Denman and lived to celebrate their 59th anniversary party held at their home May 26, 1958.

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Graham's golden wedding date was January 7, 1953 and many relatives and friends attended their 60th anniversary celebrations held at their island home in 1963.

Mr. and Mrs. Ben Hillis who came to Denman in 1946 and Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Phillips who arrived from South Wales, England in 1920 celebrated their golden wedding anniversaries during 1952.

Mr. and Mrs. Wesley Piercy who had been raised on Denman and married there also celebrated their golden wedding.

The Tom Isbister farm "Flettville" was the scene of a very happy gathering when Tommy and Winnie Isbister celebrated their golden wedding in August 1972 when 125 members of their family and relatives camped in the field for the weekend and joined many others who came from Vancouver Island and the mainland to attend the celebrations at the farm and at the community hall.

## Animals

Deer were very plentiful and nothing was more tempting to the antlered buck than the garden of the settler with its rich vegetable promise. High rail fences were not always sufficient to make the visits of the marauder an impossibility. One of the novel sights of the island life is to sit in the moonlight in a secluded spot and watch the would-be intruder and thief, for he knows he is a thief and exercises all the precautions of a shoplifter — steal up to the high palings and sniff the air for danger. Then calculating his distance, with scarcely a perceptible twitch of the muscles of his wiry legs, he vaults into the air, alights like a cat on the other side and is in his paradise. Unfortunately he cannot get a run to enable him to jump out and often the farmer has not then to go farther than his garden for his supply of venison.

Abraham Pickles had a potato patch a little distance from his house and every morning he found traces of the four-legged visitor. He decided to sit on a stump near by at dusk and wait and this went on for some time as the deer was foxy and never showed himself. One evening Mrs. Pickles walked out to the patch and sat by Abraham but growing cold she returned home. The deer thought Abraham had left and in a few minutes time he wandered out into the garden and Abraham was able to shoot him. Deer are quick to scent danger but are not able to count.

Denman deer are not as large as those on Vancouver Island but occasionally a big one will swim across from Vancouver Island.

Denman has always been particularly free of other wild animals but it is known that on three occasions a bear did swim across Baynes Sound from Vancouver Island. A bear was seen among the sheep at Abraham Pickle's place in the early 1890s but it was not around long and was probably shot by the Indians who were camping at their summer homes at the north end.

Tom Nixon spotted an animal swimming across from the Union Bay area and when carcasses of sheep half devoured were found several times at various points of the island it was suspected that a bruin was on the trail. One evening several horse and buggy loads of young people were driving to the old hall to a strawberry social, when the horses sensed the animal and stopped at the top of the cemetery hill. Mr. Bear walked across the road in the hollow where he had been munching the heavy clusters of salmonberries.

He disappeared in the woods and by the time Frank Stewart and his dog arrived on the scene the chase was unavailing as the bear, by instinct, knew how to evade pursuit.

Settlers were uneasy as many of the school children walked for miles along wooded roads. A bounty was offered but reports of tracks continued to come in as the bear made his rounds. Boldness, however was his downfall as he came out in the open to pause for liquid refreshments at the large stock-watering trough not 150 yards from the Tom Piercy ranch house. Pigs in the nearby piggery were terrified and their squeals alerted the Piercy boys who were sitting in the sunshine taking it easy on a Sunday morning. Irvine seized his bicycle and grabbed a hatchet which was handy and gave chase shouting directions to his brothers, Jim and Fred who were following on the run with their shot guns. Harve who lived across the field from the ranch arrived with his rifle and the first shot took bruin behind the shoulder and the bullet passed through his body. Weakened but not discouraged he still sought the path of evasion, finally scaling a tree right by the roadside by the line fence between the Ormiston and McMillan farms. There he was peppered by those near at hand, most of whom had shot guns. The effect was as unnoticeable as if peas had been used instead of buck shot. Finally Harve with a well aimed



shot from his rifle caught bruin in the spine and down fell the 250 pound black bear.

Maggie and Mabel McMillan who were on their way to church arrived on the scene in time to see the excitement. They pulled some hair from the bear's hide to show to the congregation to prove their story. After the service everyone gathered at the ranch to view the beast, many of whom had never had a close look at a bear. Pictures were taken and the bounty was divided among the captors.

The head was set up as a trophy under which was inscribed "The first bear killed on Denman Island, June 3, 1910." The skin was tanned and was around for years, and finally the trophy was stored in a cupboard under the stairs. Children visiting the ranch loved to peek in the bear's head. When Irvine built his new home the head was left behind and later when apples were stored in the old house the head became a target for Irvine's children's well-aimed apples.

Forty years later in 1950 the third bear was killed. He was around for several weeks and had killed sheep at Carl Neilson's and at Ernest Pickle's before he was finally trapped and shot by Pickles.

There had been reports of a cougar being seen at various times but in 1937 one was shot at the south end of Denman. John Carlson an old fisherman who lived in a cabin near the little fishing settlement of Princetown had seen signs of a cougar so he carried a gun while walking in the forest. One day the cougar appeared right in his path only a short distance away and he was thankful he had his gun and was able to shoot him. John Corrigan hauled it across the island on his trailer and he stopped at the school so that the children could see the big carcass of the only cougar shot on Denman.

Beaver have been inhabitants of the lakes and ponds on Denman for many years. During the last decades there seemed to be only one lone beaver who was seen in Chickadee Lake and occasionally in Graham Lake. The beaver was very industrious and he insisted on damming up the culvert on the Pickles road by Tweedie's marsh every winter causing water to overflow the road and make it impassible at times. Lately it has been reported that there is more than one beaver so maybe a mate has joined him. Sometimes a lazy beaver is chased out of the beaver colony so it is possible one did swim across from Vancouver Island.

Mink are found around the beaches and if the feed on the shore is scarce they will travel a distance inland and raid the farmer's hen house. Jack Phillips trapped mink for a living and the McFarlan boys sold their winter trappings.

Raccoon are unknown on Denman. A youth who had been raised on Denman and moved to Hornby thought he would play a trick on former Denman school mates so he brought a raccoon body over from Hornby and placed it on the road by the school. Naturally it caused some excitement and the word spread around quickly that a raccoon had been

run over by the school bus. It wasn't until some time later that the truth leaked out. During the depression boys trapped muskrats and sold their skins. Otters are frequently seen by the shore.

Pheasants and grouse were plentiful in early days but recently with fewer farmyards and grain fields and many more residents, some years the season for hunting has been closed. Quail are almost extinct and snipe disappeared years ago. Boys bringing home the cows in the early morning were expert shots with their sling shots or even a rock in hitting a blue grouse or two thus helping out with cost of living in the hungry thirties.

Ducks are plentiful and good mallard hunting takes place in the large swamps. Canada geese often land in farmer's fields.

Early settlers dug wells on their property and many had enough water for household use and for their stock. In the very dry seasons some had to haul water as the wells did not fill up until the fall rains in November.

Three old timers were expert at water witching and found most of the old wells on the island. Some of these wells are still in use but have been cribbed and cemented up and substantial covers added. Robert Swan used the willow stick for wells. He could also locate metal and he found a gold watch which Bill Millard had lost. George Beadnell used the stick and he also used knitting needles and with the help of a compass he would predict the depth. William Baikie used the willow stick and predicted the depth by stepping back and forth across the stream until the stick refused to go down. In recent years many others have found that the willow wand works for them.

When homes were modernized and bathrooms installed some of the old wells did not have sufficient water to meet the increased demand. Recently many have had wells drilled with good success while other have dry holes. Sulphur tasting wells are not uncommon. On the Tom Isbister farm three wells all within the area of a quarter of an acre were different. One was a sulphur spring, in one the water gushed out of a drilled hole in the rock and the third was dug in blue clay.

Natural springs usually supply adequate water for the irrigation of gardens and home use. When Joe Griffen lived on his property near the ferry at Gravelly Bay he dammed a natural spring and had an excellent water supply. J. Harrison owned this property in 1975. Jim Piercy piped the water from a natural spring at the back of his property at the foot of the mountain to a water tower by his home and he had a good supply for gardens and household use.

Denman's water samples tested within the range of soft to medium hard and is generally found to have low mineral content depending on different areas. Fluoride, iron, manganese are found in small quantities and generally speaking the drinking water is good tasting. The sulphur water improves with standing for a time in the air while water from rock wells is hard but good tasting.



## Bird Watchers

Mr. and Mrs. W. Fitzpatrick belong to and take an active part in the Comox-Strathcona Natural History Society. Over 200 species of bird life are found in the area from Campbell River to Qualicum, including Denman and Hornby Islands.

The Fitzpatricks attend the annual bird count day held at Victoria on New Year's Day.

Prior to coming to Denman Island in June 1963 Mr. Fitzpatrick was a director in a natural history group in California's National Park.

Mr. and Mrs. George Ruddick and Mrs. George Giffen are ardent bird watchers also. Many of the residents are interested in the humming birds and wait their arrival each spring.

For several years now Phil Moore has had a pen of pheasants so his three young sons could care for and learn their habits. In the fall when the family return to their home in Chilliwack the pheasants are turned loose in a farmer's barnyard where they are protected and in this way they soon learn to fend for themselves.

## Grand Central Station

From the turn of the century the home of Tom and Maggie Chalmers was a stop-over for travelling Hornby Island residents, especially after the Government telephone was installed connecting the two islands, around 1907.

Many a storm-stayed visitor appreciated Maggie's kindly disposition and cheerful and unfailing hospitality. All transportation between the islands was from the Chalmers beach to Phipps Point. Mr. L. Savoie ran a weekly trip to Courtenay and also made many trips to Denman for passengers with his gas boat.

Tom and Winnie Isbister took over the Chalmers dairy farm in March 1930 and for the next 13 years until the Hornby ferry was established in 1943 Hornby residents and visitors continued to drop in to phone Savoie or stay over if it was too stormy to cross. The Isbister family fondly called their home "Grand Central Station".

One very stormy evening as the Isbister family were finishing their evening meal there was a knock at the kitchen door and they were very surprised to see Bill Day of Hornby. He was rain drenched as he had walked his team of horses all the way from Courtenay and after crossing on the Denman ferry had walked across Denman. His heavy overcoat was made heavier by having the pockets filled with chains which could have

been tied to the harness if he had thought of it. Tom put the horses in the barn and after a hearty supper Bill said his feet were sore. In fact he could not get his boots on for three or four days and had to wear rubbers. He was storm stayed for nearly a week until it was calm enough for Mr. Savoie to come across with a raft and transport one horse at a time across Lambert Channel.

Another time a number of residents had travelled to Courtenay to do some last-minute Christmas shopping. It turned too stormy for Mr. Savoie to make the return trip so the passengers came to Isbisters via the Denman ferry. Mrs. S. Parnell and Mrs. C. Beall, also Bill Arthurs and several boys spent the night. When Mr. Savoie returned from Courtenay he called in for them.

The three young Savoie girls, Margaret, Mary and Muriel who were attending the convent at Nanaimo used to wait patiently at Isbisters until their father came for them when they were returning home for the Christmas or Easter holidays.

When Dr. Tillman Briggs was called to Hornby he drove his car to Buckley Bay, crossed on the Denman ferry and had Wes Piercy drive him to Isbister's beach where Mr. Savoie was waiting with his gas boat. It was a dark stormy night and it took several hours to make the trips. Wes Piercy and W. Baikie had waited at Isbister's until the doctor returned. He had a special ferry take him to Buckley Bay and it was very late before he reached his home in Courtenay. Mr. Savoie often phoned to say he was bringing someone over on their way to hospital.

One stormy New Year's Eve, Mr. Savoie and his young son Francis were returning from a trip to Courtenay when the engine in his boat started to act up and he did not think he could reach Hornby before dark. He was half way between the north end of Denman and Fillongley Park so he anchored his boat and they rowed ashore in the skiff where he built a large fire. He left Francis there and he walked four or more miles along the beach to Isbisters in order to phone his home. He stayed the night at Walter Schmidt's and in the morning his son Albert came over with his boat to tow his father's home.

Mrs. S. Parnell of Hornby was on her way to Vancouver to meet her son Geoffrey who was returning from overseas. It was much too rough for Albert Savoie's boat to land at Isbister's beach so he phoned Tom Isbister to meet him at McFarlan's Bay. Albert managed to get close enough to shore to place a plank to a log so Mrs. Parnell could practically crawl ashore while Tom steadied the plank. He drove her across Denman and the ferry was in the breakwater for shelter so Tom had to help Mrs. Parnell along the top of the breakwater out to the ferry.

There were many stories of hazardous crossings in storms before the larger ferries began serving the islands.

On the night of December 4, 1945, Walter and Betty Schmidt left for home after visiting her aunt and uncle, Winnie and Tom Isbister.



There was snow on the ground and it was real stormy. Sometime around 2 a.m. Walter was back knocking at their bedroom door to say Betty had to go to the hospital. Tom hurried over to Jack Isbister's to get Bob Isbister to go and be deck-hand on the ferry. Luckily Bob took an axe as there were several small trees across the mountain road.

He and Jack Bradley had the "Billy B" running by the time Walter, Betty and Winnie arrived. The Island highway was covered in places with small limbs and branches but the road was clear of fallen trees. They arrived at St. Joseph's hospital Comox and the baby arrived before too long. Walter and Winnie sat in the waiting room until daylight and then drove the short distance to Wallace Baikie's home. They tapped on the window and Kay Isbister who was staying there going to high school, heard them. Later that morning when Walter and Winnie were driving through Union Bay they had to stop and have a flat tire fixed. Fortunately it had not happened the night before.

For many years the Government Telegraph station for South Denman was in the Isbister home. In 1927 a connecting switch was installed to enable persons on the rural line to talk to someone in Courtenay or elsewhere. This meant that when the switch was turned on all 30 telephones on the rural line and some 20 telephones on the Telegraph system were open. If the parties forgot to ring off when they hung up then the next time a person rang it would ring on all 50 phones. Anyone could take the receiver down while the parties were talking. Often Mrs. Isbister had her hands in the bread dough or else while bathing a baby had to grab a towel and a wet baby and run to the phone in order to turn the switch. Emergency calls often came in the middle of the night and sometimes Mr. Savoie would walk in and holler "It's only me wanting to use your phone".

Stock dealers, salesmen from Buckerfields and Brackman and Kerr, District Agriculturists Provincial Department of Agriculture officials, Calf Club judges, ministers, District nurses and members of the District 71 school board were among the many persons who enjoyed the Isbisters' hospitality on short notice over the years.

Lacking refrigeration an emergency cupboard was kept full of home canned fruit, vegetables, meat and fish. Cooking for a large family proved there was always enough in the pot for an extra plate or two. Their large kitchen family-room was the scene of many happy events - as surprise birthday parties, festive gatherings and shivarees, three of which took place in one year. A number of relatives gathered to surprise Helen and Dave McGowan and one of the boys fired a gun outside their bedroom window. Several days later the telephone lineman was checking out trouble on the line which he narrowed down to be near the Isbister's home but could see no apparent breaks when he noticed the black wire frayed opposite the upstairs window. He investigated and found several shot gun pellets in the wire. Dave was subjected to much teasing as both

he and Helen were employed by the B.C. Telephone Company at Vancouver.

The family soon learned to milk cows, single turnips, hay and help around the house. Lunches took a lot of baking and the older ones took turns at mixing up a layer cake or rock cookies or maybe rolled out cookies as slices or squares had not become popular. The potato water was saved from the evening meal and before going to bed their mother would soak a Royal, yeast cake and then mix the dough in a large enamel or tin mixing pan, place the lid on it and sit it on a cushion on a chair and cover it over with a blanket or coats to keep it warm. In the morning it was punched down and when risen was put in the bread pans. When Fleishmann's yeast came on the market it cut the bread-making time in half. Several large batches were required each week for school lunches. The oven in a wood stove was ever ready and Denman ladies were very good bakers. They often vied with their layer cake creations with scrumptious filling and frostings. Pies were very much in demand and nothing was tastier in winter than one made with wild blackberries. These were the small wild blackberries which grow on brambles which grew in profusion over logs and stumps following a slash burn after logging. The best berries were always in spots hard to reach and often our lard pails tipped in the scramble upsetting part of our precious berries. Now-a-days Himalaya blackberries grow in spots along the roadsides but they can't compare with the bramble berry.

Wild strawberries grew in the chopping when the cows pastured and the youngsters could easily fill a cup while driving the cows home and they had a special treat for dessert. Girls had wonderful playhouses like imaginary castles or cathedrals amid the moss-covered ground or logs under the trees where ferns and flowers grew. They spent many hours in a fantasy world. They watched eagerly for the first red currant blossoms, the first yellow violets, mayflowers, spring beauty and bleeding heart flowers and became great nature lovers. They made collections of pressed flowers, barks, shells, feathers, coloured leaves and stones.

The first pussy willows, alder catkins and skunk cabbage were picked as soon as the frogs began to croak in the spring.

Happy hours were spent on the swing attached to the big maple tree by the barn, and also playing hop-scotch.



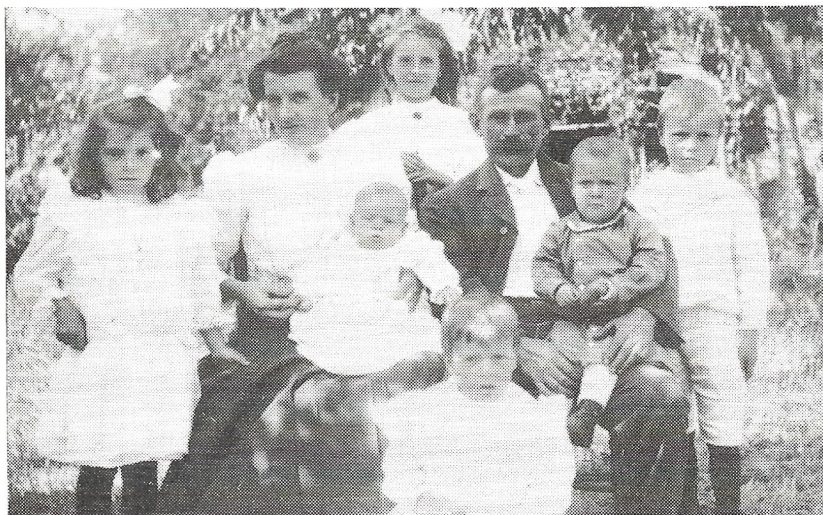


Tommie and Winnie Isbister's 50th wedding anniversary, August 2, 1972.



The Tom Isbister family, Christmas day, 1942. Winnie with Merlie, Tom, Kay, Bill, Jean and Beth. *Front row:* Helen, Tommy, Hazel and Peter.





The W. Baikie family, 1909. *Standing*: Eunice, Winnie and Wallace. *Seated*: Mrs. Baikie and Jack W. Baikie and Harper. *In front*: Rose.



Tom and Winnie Isbister and family, June 30, 1962. *In front*: Merlie, Kay, Hazel, and Helen. *Standing*: Tommy, Beth, Bill, Winnie and Tom, Jean and Peter.



Relatives camping at Flettville for the 50th wedding anniversary, August 2, 1972.



## Bits and Pieces

Harry Pickles was a pleasant happy-go-lucky person and time did not worry him in the least. He lived alone in his cabin near Chickadee Lake and he often visited his cousins the Pickles boys. Harry loved to play cards and he would stay all hours of the night. The boys thought they would play a trick on him so they did not fill the lamp with coal oil as usual one night. When the lamp burned dry Bert said, "Well now we will have to stop playing and go to bed." Harry said, "Don't worry there is lots of oil in my lantern" and he stepped out onto the porch and brought in the lantern, turned up the wick and set it on the table all set for another game or two.

Harry did not get up early but he was often seen walking along the road carrying his lantern on his way to feed his sheep. Neighbours would help him take in his hay and the last load was always taken in by lantern light.

Harry loved to play a card game called "solo" so one night Tommy Isbister and William Baikie decided to outwit him. They had some wonderful games and as it was winter time Tommy had to keep the wood stove fueled up. Before Harry decided he had better go home the wood box was almost empty and the water in the double boiler porridge pot had been filled up twice and the children were waking up.

Harry usually rode his bicycle when he went to the store for his mail and often on his way home he would drop into the Baikie home for a game of solo. Harper Baikie and his bride Myrtle arrived home one cold January evening after their honeymoon. Word got around they were home so a party of young people planned to shivaree them and they had gathered near the house waiting for the light to go out. Someone crept up near and saw Dad Baikie, Harry, Harper and Myrtle playing solo so they decided it was hopeless to wait until Harry went home so they approached the door banging their tin cans and noise makers. They were invited in to meet the newly weds amid much noise and laughter while refreshments were being served.

When a Denman boy or girl got married on the island the community was usually asked to the reception but if the couple went away to be married they would be shivareed the night they arrived home. Relatives and friends would wait until they thought everyone in the house was asleep and then at a signal the noise would begin, shots were fired into the air and sometimes a stick of powder would go off and the noise could be heard for miles on a still night especially across the water.

People did not travel to Couttenay very often around 1925 so consequently new licence plates were often a week or two late in being put on the few cars on the island. One beautiful Sunday morning when a special Easter service was being held at the United Church some of the

congregation had walked, some came horse and buggy and four cars were parked along the roadside in front of the church.

Following the service when everyone was chatting several of the boys discovered that three of the four cars had tickets on them. This naturally caused some excitement as a policeman seldom visited the island. It appears one had been passing through from Hornby and noticed the old licence plates and it must have been too good a chance to pass up.

The usual group of settlers, young and old sat around outside waiting for the steamer to arrive. Walter McFarlan was quite elderly and dozed off while sitting on a log. Two mischievous young boys, Frank Nixon and Bert Pickles nailed Walter's raincoat tails to the log. When the steamer blew its whistle as it approached the dock Walter woke up with a start and tried to stand up only to find he had to take his coat off. He saw these boys laughing and he really told them off.

Another day a logger arrived on the steamer carrying a cloth valise which he set down on the wharf right where a number of people were talking. When the boat whistled to leave Mrs. Robert Swan was rather startled and stepped backwards over the valise. She was getting on in years and falling really shook her up. Her husband was so upset he kicked the valise over the edge of the wharf. The stranger was seen later fishing up his valise at low tide and it was believed it contained several bottles of whiskey he was loathe to lose.

A popular place where the teenagers on the east side of the island used to gather on a Sunday afternoon was at the Washington Scotts. Washington would play his accordion and sing Redwing, Arra Wana and Bedelia and he amused the young people by saying "It's a caution Maggie". Maggie was a witty Irish lady and she loved to hear the news while she served tea. She played the organ and sang "Peek-a-Boo" and other songs of the day.

The Women's Institute held a series of whist drives each winter and the games were played in the upstairs room at the community hall. Two regular players, Donald and George, were perturbed over the weakness of the coffee being served by the ladies so they decided to play a trick on them. Before the games started the ladies put the half-filled wash boiler of cold water on the wood stove so the water would be boiling when the games were over. A pound of coffee tied in a cloth was left ready to pop into the boiling water when the ladies went to prepare refreshments.

Donald slipped downstairs to the kitchen and popped a half-pound of coffee into the boiler and anticipated a real strong brew for a change. When a couple of the ladies went downstairs, they smelt the coffee and thought one of the other ladies had already made it. The prizes were awarded and supper was served. The coffee was terrible -- weaker than



usual. George exclaimed "Good life" and looked at Donald. Their trick had backfired. Everyone had a good laugh when the ladies found the bag of coffee still on the table in the kitchen.

Cars were more or less a luxury around 1920 and few residents owned one. Gavin Russell drove his Ford down to the store and left it parked by the verandah. He was chatting with the genial store keeper, Pat Doheny, when his neighbour William Baikie walked into the store. He had also driven down to get his mail. A great deal of joshing took place. Just as Gavin collected his mail and left, in walked Tom Isbister. All three men had identical cars and as was the custom in those days the car keys were seldom taken out. Gavin cranked Baikie's car and drove off. When Baikie left with his mail and groceries he drove off in Tom's car. Tom came out of the store a little later and noticed his car was not where he had parked it. He soon discovered his car was gone and the one left belonged to Russell. After several phone calls all three cars were back in front of the store and returned to their rightful owners and Pat had a good story to tell.

Jack Day was driving Jack Martin's team of Clydesdale horses home from the wharf and as they neared the top of the wharf hill something frightened them and in the excitement Jack dropped a rein. The horses took off on the run and as they crossed over the little bridge over the creek at Alby Graham's (Drinkwater) corner the wagon and team upset over the low railing and fell down into the water. One horse broke his leg and for a time they thought he would have to be destroyed but Wes Piercy took him and doctored him and he was able to do light work again.

Boys were warned not to ride their bikes down the wharf hill but several boys on different occasions did ride down at such a speed they rode right out on the wharf and over the edge into the sea. They were able to swim to safety and the bike was rescued when the tide was low.

Francis Graham was driving home from the wharf with his democrat loaded with supplies for their store. Part way up the narrow mountain road Lad shied and backed up and the democrat tipped over the bank spilling groceries down the hillside.

The sharp corner at the foot of the mountain road has always been a hazard and several cars failed to make the turn. Recently it has been widened but in 1975 a large freight truck's brakes failed and it raced down the hill and through a fence and crashed into a house causing a great deal of damage.

Irvine Piercy had a light driving horse named Dan Patch which he drove in his rubber-tired buggy. This was a popular conveyance with the young men before the advent of the motor car.

An amusing incident happened when a highly respected gentleman thought he would play a trick on his boys. This man planned to be away from home for a time and he knew the boys would be looking for beer

during the haying season so he took two dozen bottles and carefully hid them under a log some distance from his house.

When he returned and went to look for the beer he could not find it so he had his grandchildren help him search for it but there was no trace of it. He presumed he had forgotten where he had hid it or else the boys had found it.

Some 30 years later when his great grandsons were clearing land they moved an old log and there was the beer! Only one bottle was broken and apparently the ferns and leaves of many years had protected them from several severe winter frosts.

The big ox which pulled Abraham Pickles in his home-made cart was thin and getting old. He sold the ox to Johnny McMillan who fed him up on turnips and meal. Johnny sold the one-ton ox to George Howe's butcher shop at Union Bay. Howe butchered it and sold the meat to the tug boats. The ox had put on new flesh and the meat was good.

A number of friends had gathered in the parlour at the Tom Piercy ranch home to witness the marriage of a young couple. The bridegroom had been subjected to a great deal of teasing and a couple of his friends had bet him they would get the first kiss. The elderly minister was conducting the service and being rather slow he paused for a moment and the nervous bridegroom hearing a slight sound behind him suddenly grabbed the bride and kissed her. The startled minister said, "No hurry, no hurry" and proceeded with the ceremony much to the amusement of all present.

## I Remember

### *My Grandmother's Home*

Strange how incidents stand out in my childhood memories. One of the first things I recall was standing in our hallway on the night of September 11, 1904 while my mother helped me into my coat. Uncle Irvine had ridden across the island on horseback to tell us that Grandpa Piercy had passed away. His grave was enclosed with rails until the new cemetery was completed. When I started school I used to walk past and often stopped to look through the rails and wonder.

Babies have a habit of disregarding time and weather and when my sister Rose decided to arrive in a hurry early on the 18th of January, there was about three feet of snow on the ground. My mother had gone to Grannie's to await the new arrival and had taken the rest of us along also. That morning we were dressed and told to play in the dining room but Wallace and Eunice knew something was happening, so they stood crying by the closed door. Feeling quite big, being almost six years old, I went



out on the veranda and to add to the excitement, I accidentally stepped backwards off into the snow which was level with the boards. I am sure my aunt Rose, who was in her teens at the time was ready to shake us all good and plenty. When my Dad arrived he named the baby after Aunt Rose and my mother.

Often during the good weather we would go to Grannie's for dinner after church. On one occasion that spring, while we were all seated around the big table, a stranger, Jack Wood who had come from Vancouver with uncle Jim to visit, complained of not feeling very well. Shortly afterwards he came down with the red measles and needless to say we all caught them. My mother was very sick and also the new baby. Most of our cousins caught them also and Peg Cessford and her brother Rob were so sick they had to be driven across the island in a buggy which had the back fixed up with a bed and with blankets draped above them to keep out the light. Grannie immediately took over and with continuous hot baths managed to break Peg's fever. This hot and cold bath treatment was Grannie's cure for croup.

Occasionally I went from school to visit Grannie, walking over three miles across the island. As I approached the Ranch, I had to pass a large watering trough where a dozen or more cows stood drinking. I was always glad to be past them as they noticed me strange.

I stopped at the pig pen to see the big pigs and all the baby pigs, each mother and family had a separate pen in the long shed. The calves were all penned in a corral in the barn floor, and what a noise they made at feeding time. The cows and horses were in the lean-to and the hay was piled high in the mows. Grannie used to send me in the mows to look for eggs when the hens stole their nests away. Sometimes I would find several nests with a dozen or two eggs in them. I had to bring them down the ladder, often held in my pinny. I was always afraid I would find a clucker on a nest. When I was four or five years old I was reaching over boards to touch some baby chicks when I went head first in the pen and the old mother hen pecked me until I was rescued.

Grannie's house had many charms. There were many hiding places and the dark pantry with no window was an ideal spot. Several steps led down to an inside dairy and store room. The shelves were lined with jars of fruit, jams, jelly and pickles. Large tins of milk stood ready to be skimmed of a thick layer of yellow cream. New bread with a layer of this cream and a sprinkle of sugar was a great treat called a "piece".

I loved to watch the butter-making process. The cream was placed in the large wooden churn and after a considerable time of turning the handle and hearing the cream go plunk, plunk on the inside of the churn the sound would change as the cream turned to butter. The buttermilk was drained off and the butter washed and the water drained off three times before the mound of butter was placed on the butter worker to be worked and moulded into pounds ready for sale.

I enjoyed the winter evenings, usually my uncles sat around the big table and played cards or checkers. A pretty hanging lamp was pulled down to give more light. Sometimes the men played the fiddle while the ladies sewed or mended. Grannie always neat and tidy, her dark work apron replaced by a spotless lace trimmed one and a frilly jabot on her blouse, sat on a red plush cushion in her rocking chair. Her Bible was nearby on the window sill. Yards of red plush from the seats on the "Alpha" were salvaged along the beach after the wreck and it was made up into cushions.

The spare room was always in readiness for visitors and the parlour, with its lace curtains and stately organ was very special. Enlarged photos of relatives hung on the walls. It was a great treat to sleep with Grannie in her feather bed. I liked to look at all the lovely views on the stereoscope.

One day Grannie asked me to sweep up around the heater in the dining room, but on inspection I was told to move everything and resweep it. I never forgot the lesson. A large oak desk sat in the corner where all the post office material was kept. Several large Japanese pictures were hung on the wall. Many freighters came into Union Bay for coal in those days and things from far-off countries were obtainable. One other picture was especially lovely, a boy and girl were gathering flowers on a high cliff and a large guardian angel stood over them. All the men slept upstairs and I remember helping Aunt Rose make the beds.

A long verandah faced the beach and hop vines kept it shady in summer. A hammock hung nearby in the summer house, lilac bushes grew by the well and there was a feeling of peace and beauty all around. There were always lots of people around.

Exciting things were always happening at Grannie's. I was among the many visitors who arrived there to view the first bear killed June 3, 1910.

Great preparations were made for the wedding of my Aunt Rose who married Tommy Scott in August 1912. A large platform floor, 40 feet by 30 feet was laid in the back yard and a large tent was secured to accommodate the large crowd of relatives and friends. The bridal party stood before an archway of evergreens and flowers. Peg Cessford and Edith Chalmers were flower girls. Jean Cessford sang and supper was set in the house for 150 guests.

Travellers usually made the Ranch their home and one welcome visitor was the peddler. Unexpected company did not seem to bother Grannie. When a horse and buggy could be seen approaching at a little distance, she would get a pan of bark chips to hurry the fire. In no time, with a cup of cream she would mix up a batch of biscuits or a plain cake, to pop into the oven. She was all set by the time visitors had tied up the horse and was ready for a visit. She always had a great bowl of apple sauce as apples were so plentiful. I loved the first small ripe Gravensteins which fell off the trees. They were so sweet and juicy. Apples were picked and



placed in the bins in the apple shed, lovely red and yellow apples, a sight to remember. Cider was made from the smaller ones and many a young boy sampled the cider. I cherish my happy memories of my childhood days spent with a great and wonderful Grannie.

Written by her granddaughter Winnie

## My Home

Years have brought many changes to this little community - the powerful ferry replaces the former rowboat, the "old hall" has been succeeded by another. Trucks with hearty engines pack produce; the half day trip "across the island" has gone. Tourists seek summer quiet in their noisy way.

Unchanged, though, are the people who have made Denman their home. Here there is time for a cup of coffee and a chat with a friend - people visit without invitation, assured of a friendly word and a shared interest. People know one another, each adds something to the personality of the island. There is no urban sophistication, no hot-headed hurry to get somewhere; time is used to live in, not to race with.

The woods are cool and deep, full of small-boy treasures, the beaches are long and quiet, their edges frosted with gravel and barnacles. The water is clear for swimming and ripe for fishing.

Here, as in the past, a man with his two hands and a little gumption can make his honest way. Yes, Denman has changed in material ways but in the more basic things it is the same. T'is indeed a bonnie place to live.

By Beth,  
Grand-daughter of William Baikie  
written in 1949

The Denman Rag and Bone, published monthly, is a new adventure in journalism. It keeps up to date with current events as well as feature stories recalling past history.